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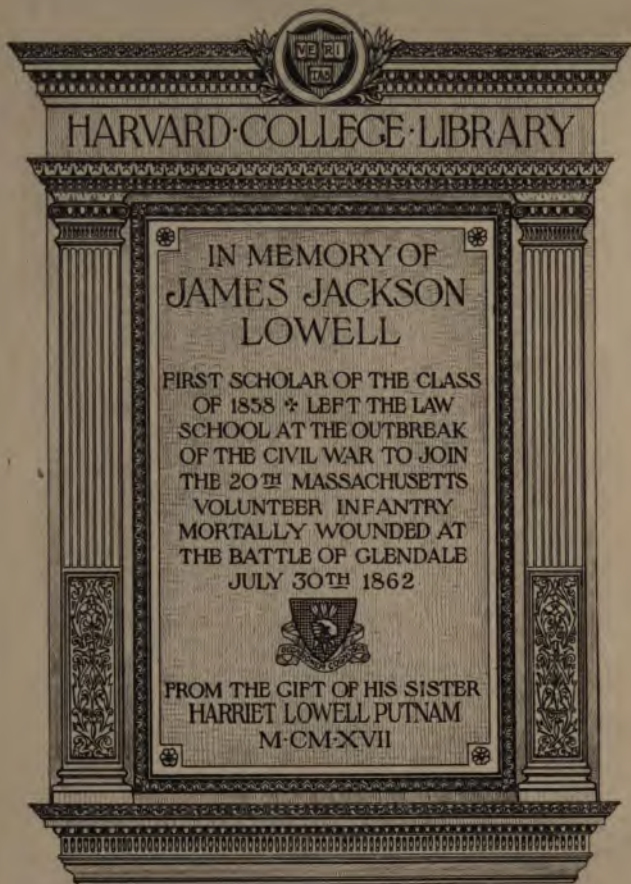
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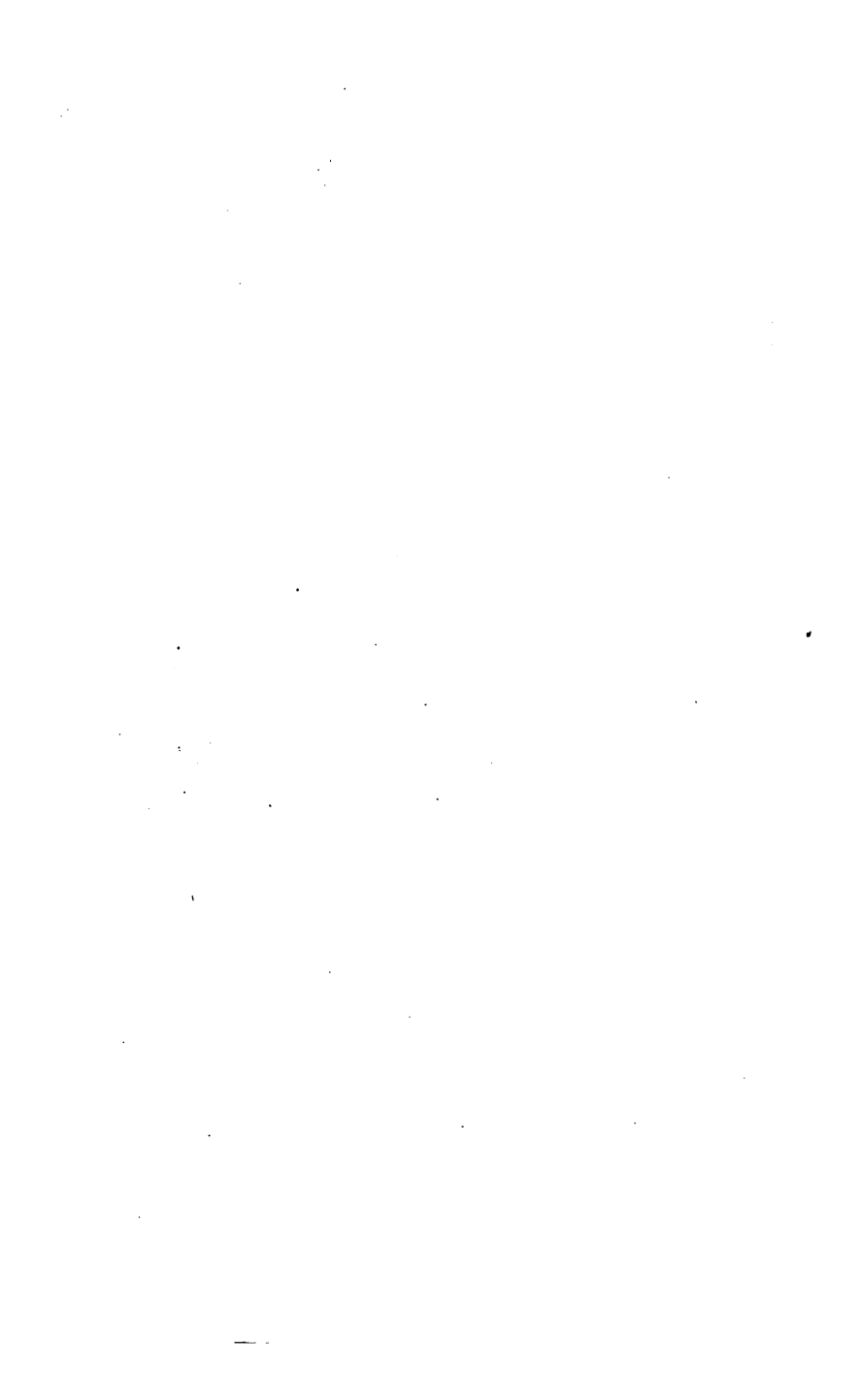
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A "SEÑORITA ARISTOCRÁTICA."

An American Girl In Mexico

By Elizabeth Visère McGary



With Illustrations

New York
Hodd, Mead and Company

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An American Girl in Mexico

**TO MY FRIENDS,
THE MEXICANS AMONG WHOM I FOUND SUCH A
HAPPY HOME.**



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AN AMERICAN GIRL IN MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

To one who has never known the joy of basking idly beneath the influence of Mexico's soft sunshine, description seems extravagant. There is something inexpressibly pleasing in every phase of that Edenic climate. The moment I stepped from the train early one morning at Monterey into brighter sunshine than I had ever known before and viewed the soft, white heaps of clouds on the surrounding red mountains, I knew that an extravaganza on its charms would be an impossibility.

The choice of transport to the hotels after leaving the stuffy little sleeper lay be-
x

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tween a quaint mule car and an old coach of the model of 1850. While we were debating which we should take, the more progressive itinerants rumbled away in every available coach, and, not much disappointed, we betook ourselves to the little yellow car, on the platform of which sat the driver, lazily reveling in one of the native shuck-wrapped cigarettes. It was several minutes before he aroused himself to the realization of his responsibilities, when he took one last, loving puff at his "*cigarro*"—gave a shrill whistle between his teeth—a characteristic sound with them in driving—and lashed the mules severely with his big black whip. Away they clattered over the white stone street, so fast that we found the fresh morning air rather chilling and drew our wraps more closely about us. The car drivers wear long black cloaks, with hoods shaped like those on golf capes, and these they pull over their faces until only their black eyes peep out. On all the sidewalks men and

women were crouched as if freezing, completely enveloped in crimson blankets. These are drawn up over their heads until one finds it difficult to distinguish a man from a woman.

These blankets are among the essentials of a wardrobe; a child hoards up his first pennies toward the purchase of one of his own, and seems thoroughly self-satisfied when wrapped in its warm folds. The day really never grows cold enough to require such protection, but from their viewpoint it is never too warm for a blanket to be a comfort. On the warmest July day one can see these animated red and purple blankets on every street corner.

On a bright January morning, such as that of our arrival, words are inadequate to express the picturesqueness of a street scene. It is remarkable that in so short a journey one can reach a land so fascinatingly foreign as that upon which we gazed that morning from our little side-

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tracked sleeper. The blanketed population, the brown children, hairless dogs and Spanish music were to us like a scenic production in some fine theatre, as we rattled on behind the little mules, that every few minutes received a sharp reminder of their duty in the form of a sounding stroke from the driver's whip, which he had just energy enough to administer.

After what seemed to us a pleasantly endless circuit up one stony street and down another, we alighted at a quaint looking hotel. A German clerk received us with the most elaborate mixture of German and Spanish manners, and, as soon as we had registered, proceeded to write our names on a blackboard which hung in the entry, with the number of the room opposite each name. Then we went to breakfast.

Such a time as we had! Not one of us knew a word of Spanish, and not a waiter knew our language; but as my purpose in coming was to learn theirs, I became

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spokesman for the party. When I bade farewell to my friends at home I laughingly told them that I knew only one word of Spanish—"cochero"—which means coachman, and they told me that "a little learning is a dangerous thing." Circumstances had even denied me an exposition of this knowledge by leaving us without a coach that morning. By gesticulating and pointing at what others were eating, and other methods, more effective than elegant, we finally had a breakfast before us. The least said of that breakfast the better. I know only that we would gladly have exchanged the same, novelty thrown in, for one at home. But we laughed more than we ate, and we ate a good deal, too. My spirits fell when I thought that in a few days I would be left here alone, but I tried to put the thought aside. The hall boy acts as boot-black, porter, messenger and chambermaid. He runs a free school for the dissemination of Spanish to the ignorant guests. This he

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does "*con mucho gusto*" if he can understand the questions put to him in the almost baby talk that Americans use in speaking to a Mexican.

There was more laughter when we went up to our rooms. Such a quaint place as a Mexican hotel is built entirely of stone, both floors and walls, upstairs and down! The rooms are in a circle around a *patio* or court. This is brilliant with all kinds of lovely flowers, and filled with their fragrance. Pigeons splash in the cool waters of a fountain in the centre all day long. This *patio* makes a beautiful picture, with the mild but radiant sunshine streaming over it, lending a thousand prismatic colors to the waters of the fountain. There is such a sense of novelty in Mexico. Even the clank, clank of shoes up the stone stairs has a strange, new sound. The galleries are filled with people lounging in big, rope rockers, some chatting, others reading, but more dozing lazily, even in the early morning.

Our rooms had double doors, one above the other. The lower one, about four feet high, could be locked and the other left open.

The furniture was unlike any I ever saw. The use of single black iron bedsteads is almost universal throughout the Republic—an inconsistent evidence of their knowledge of hygiene. My room was in black, and had a big, hemp rug on the floor. After a two hours' "*siesta*" we went down on the plaza in front of the hotel, and sat in mute admiration until the dinner hour. The *plaza* is a large square, beautiful with flowers and palm-trees. There was every kind of flower, even to magnolias in abundance, and fountains played among the trees. Every shady nook is fitted with a bench, and from the bandstand in the centre, almost hidden amid the trees, the soft, sensuous music of stringed instruments delights the idlers there nearly every evening. *Plaza Hidalgo*, smaller than the favorite *Zaragosa*, is most of the year aflame with crimson poppies,

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whose somnolent qualities under the influence of the sun produce a delicious languor upon the loiterer there.

All classes of people gather on the *plazas* in the evening. There are three walks laid out. The one on the edge is for the people of the higher class, and for *all* Americans; the next for those of the middle class, and on the inside walk throng the "*peons*," or people of the lower classes. That they know so well how to take their proper place was a constant wonder to me; it is seldom that one forgets, but if he does, and tries to tread a walk too high, one of the little dried-up looking policemen takes pleasure in ejecting him. The men and women walk in different directions unless married, when they are permitted to stroll arm in arm. "Stroll" seems hardly the correct word, as they walk very rapidly, perhaps in order that they may meet their friends of the opposite sex oftener, and enjoy their little greeting, "*adios*." This word, translated,



A CHILD OF NATURE.

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means "To God," and was originally intended as our word good-bye, but has come to be the usual greeting among intimate friends.

On the afternoon of our first day in Mexico an important event occurred. A friend of mine in the States had managed to secure the promise of a boarding place for me in the home of a one-time Governor, this friend having long been on intimate terms with the family; on this afternoon, according to earlier arrangements, we went to their home to meet them. We were to take *merenda*, or five o'clock tea, with them, and I was not to return until the day of the departure of my companions.

When the carriage, after rumbling and bouncing over stones as large as my head, of which Calle de San Francisco is particularly full, at last drew up before an immense door, the *cochero* rapped loudly with the brass knocker, and I sat wondering whether I could live amid such strangeness,

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until the patter of feet was heard, the iron bar was drawn back and a brown face appeared inside the massive doorway. The boy led us into an old-fashioned parlor with mirrors on every side. All houses there have a superabundance of mirrors. They rank next in importance to food, for the Mexicans are a vain people.

Soon the Señora came in, a stately woman dressed in black, with a lace *mantilla* over her head. Extending her pretty hands, she came to me, and stooping, kissed mine in the most graceful manner, and said something I felt sure was pleasant because her smile was, though I couldn't understand a word. Fortunately a smile is the same the world over.

Her two daughters followed her, dressed in simple white, with white lace *mantillas*, and when they were introduced, kissed my hand, and I think said the same words of greeting. Such deference was likely to be disconcerting, and I was just congratulating

myself that I had not received it awkwardly, when Señor Carlos, the son, was presented. He dropped on one knee, in true cavalier style, and, taking both my hands in his, gently pressed his lips to them. I was almost overwhelmed. It seems that special greeting was extended me because I was to become a member of the household. I had now met all the members of the family, as the father had been dead some years. I was relieved that there were no more, and little thought then that before many months had passed I would bow over the Señora's hand and touch my lips to it. Nevertheless, the adage about being in Rome and doing as Rome does was carried out.

After the greetings were over, they all laughed merrily at our position, for we were unable to exchange even the most casual remarks about the weather, and even if we had been able to do this it would have been rather foolish as the weather is always the same.

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It was but a few minutes till the little, brown domestic who had met us at the door drew aside the portières, and made an announcement that we guessed to be luncheon, as the family beckoned us to rise. We were ushered into a *patio* where, beneath an immense orange tree covered with blossoms and big golden oranges, was spread a snowy table. Pigeons fluttered among the flowers, cooing softly, and the picture could not have been more complete.

The luncheon was simple. *Enchiladas* formed the first course. *Enchiladas* are much like *tamales*, except that they contain Mexican cheese, and onions. These were served with hot *tortillas*, which are very thin, white corn cakes, made of boiled corn ground as fine as flour, and bleached, and are brought in every few minutes fresh from the griddle just inside the kitchen door, where the cook kneels in full view, patting them out noisily. This patting of "*tortillas*" is an odd sound, more like the severe chas-

tisement of a child with the hand than anything else. Next came nut macaroons, and chocolate with whipped cream, and when the last sign of this had been removed, wine and mangoes were served. Mangoes are a delicious fruit, yellow and juicy—a marked favorite, and ours were served in blue, china plates with silver single-pronged forks. I learned to like them so well that when I became homesick I would go out into the street and buy one, for it is almost possible to forget all else in the trouble and enjoyment of eating them. When the *merenda* was over they showed us through the *patio* we then sat in, giving each some orange blossoms and a huge orange from the tree over the table. After they had shown us another *patio* back of this one with trees and sleepy hens in it, we left, helplessly trying to make them understand that we had had a pleasant visit, and that I would be back on Thursday; but they would only shake their heads and say,

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"Bien, bien." The Señora had patted me on the cheek and said *"Simpatica"* several times, and, as I was sure she meant something nice (for a Spaniard never says anything to one's face that isn't nice) I departed in high spirits.

CHAPTER II.

THE next afternoon we took the car out to the Bishop's Palace, a grand old historic building, with its secret entrances and exits and blood spattered walls, to which the guide points with horror depicted on his face, though on close examination the spots look strangely like splotches of red paint. The walls had thousands of names carved on their dingy surfaces—names of people from every land—some carved many, many years ago. It is a long steep ascent from the car line to the top of the hill, but this climb is made on burros, which may be hired at the foot of the mountain. The little animals pick their way carefully among the rocks and seem as faithful as humans.

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An ascent that a burro cannot climb must partake of the perpendicular. Far to the left of this hill can be seen nestling in the distant valley, the little hamlet of Santa Catarina, and the beautiful Saddle Mountain, considered the finest in Mexico. And there are no mountains in the world grander than theirs rising up majestically on every side. Several miles to the right is the "bone-yard," where there are thousands of skeletons. Burial lots may be leased for periods of two years in which bodies are buried. At the expiration of two years, unless the lease be renewed, the skeleton is exhumed and thrown into the bone-yard. Plenty of people are too poor to stand the expense of keeping their loved ones underground, and the bone-yard does not lack for gruesome blanched bones.

We saw some tourists do a daring deed. They rode, or at least started to ride, down the Bishop's Hill on their wheels. Losing control, they were precipitated down the hill



MONTEREY BETWEEN THE BISHOP'S PALACE AND SADDLE MOUNTAIN.

at a most remarkable speed. Strange to say, they did not collide. Reaching the base at nearly the same time, they flew over the handle-bars in such perfect unison that one would almost have thought this acrobatic ending a planned feature of the ride. Not one of the rough riders seemed injured, although my hair almost stood on end and my mind went faster than the wheels—so fast that I saw in imagination three funerals. Speaking of funerals, reminds me of some we saw. One was an elegant cortège headed by a street car draped in black, drawn by two black horses. This bore the coffin; thus is a man of wealth laid away. The less well-to-do people set the coffin on a sort of cart pulled by an unpretentious burro, which transports it to the city of the dead. Some are so poor that the relatives or friends have to carry the coffin between them. I saw a pathetic sight one day. A man had a tiny coffin on his shoulder, and trudged along, followed by a weeping woman and two chil-

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dren with wide open, wondering eyes. I supposed this to be a broken family circle.

Thursday came all too soon, and in the evening I went with reluctant feet to my new home. They met us in the most friendly manner, the Señora patting my cheek and saying that word *simpatica* again. I afterward learned that it has no exact English equivalent. Literally translated it means "thoroughly in sympathy with, by manners and appearance." The wife of an American Consul in Mexico said that she had discovered it to mean simply "all right."

Seating guests is a laborious if pleasant ceremony. Visitor and host vie with each other in politeness—extending their hands deprecatingly—patting one another on the shoulder and smiling winningly. The right-hand end of the sofa, that most cherished piece of furniture, is always reserved for the guest of honor, as is the right side of the seat of a carriage. The host always resigns his seat at the table to a guest.

Every one tried to look pleasant and unconcerned, but when the cathedral clock struck nine, my friends rose to go, for the train left at ten. I bore up bravely until I had said good-bye to the last one; then, bursting into tears, I wailed: "Oh, take me back home with you!"

They came back and talked a few minutes longer, and actually considered my returning with them until visions of my ignominious failure rose before me should I return home after my long-founded determination to come and carry out my cherished dream. I thought of the persuasion it had taken to carry my point, so I said "No." But when the carriage bore them away, I sank down in an abandonment of grief, which greatly distressed my sympathetic new friends. "*Pobrecita señorita solita*" ("poor little girl all alone") the Señora would murmur prettily as she patted my wet cheek, and the "*pobrecita señorita solita*" nestled very willingly in

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the motherly arms, listening, unconsciously comforted, to the endearing words. They hovered over me caressingly, even trying to dry my constantly refilling eyes, until, finally, I had to laugh. Then they took me to my room, where I was greeted by the sight of my trunks. I was deep in admiration of the old family portraits, rope-rockers, the stone floor with its bright native rugs, and open iron-barred windows with real June roses peeping modestly in, when I heard the clock strike ten. Then I faltered out "*adios*" and crawled into bed to bury my face in the pillow and sob myself to sleep, for I knew my friends had gone, that I was alone, "a stranger in a strange land." I was seriously doubting whether I cared much about learning Spanish after all, when I fell asleep to the far-away strains of that plaintive song "*La Golondrina*."

I was awakened next morning by hearing a voice call: "*Señorita, Señorita,*" at

my window, and, peeping out, saw the same brown face that had greeted us upon our arrival, only now it was brightened by a smile of recognition and friendliness. Soon there came a knock at the door. A girl entered, who silently took me by the hand, led me to the bathroom, filled the tub from the deep well by the door and brought my clothes. After my bath she started to arrange my hair, but I insisted on doing this myself, for I had never in my life had a maid. I marveled at the number of servants I had already seen, but later learned that the poor domestics are paid almost nothing for their services, so that the price a family in the States would pay a cook would there keep almost a half dozen servants. The cook of this household, a fat, good-natured woman, who came at seven in the morning and left at eleven at night, was paid ten Mexican dollars monthly, which is a little more than four of our money. She prepared breakfast, served coffee at eleven

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o'clock, luncheon at one, a *merenda* at five, and at eight dinner is served in courses. Señor Carlos seldom came in until ten, when she would prepare a fresh meal for him. But a happier soul than Luz it would be hard to find. The boy who answered the bell was her son, a dwarfed creature of sixteen, with a solemn face many years too old for the little body. If one could have a dollar for every step Pedro took during the day, pacing back and forth with *tortillas*, that person would be rich indeed, yet he received only two dollars and fifty cents a month, Mexican money, for all that work. When one sees these conditions—sees faithful sewing girls work twelve hours a day for twenty-five cents, Mexican money, and only skilled hands receive more, eating their dinner with the servants, and being in every way treated without consideration, the heart is filled with pity.

In a household of affluence there is hardly a limit to the number of servants. At least



A SMALL BURDEN FOR A PEON.

in a pretentious home may always be found a *portero* (doorkeeper), *cochero* (coachman), *recamerera* (chambermaid), *lavan-dera* (laundress), *planchadora* (ironing woman), *caballerango* (hostler), *mozo* (cheerful runner of all errands), *cocinera* (cook), *molendera* (woman who grinds corn), and, most pompous of all, the *lacayo*, or footman. Families leading a more modest existence endure the hardships of having but five or six servants. A lady never summons her help except by slapping the hands quickly together; this method is also used in the streets for calling an inferior. Servants call their mistress *Niña*, which means baby or child. It is pathetic to hear them, when rebuked, remonstrate gently, "*pues niña*" (but baby). In beckoning, a Mexican turns the palm of his hand outward—the exact reverse of our motion.

The *peons* subsist entirely on the clammy cold *tortillas* and the native boiled *frijole* beans, enough of which can be bought for

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a few pennies to feed a family all day. No housekeeper furnishes her servants any other food than this. Perhaps this is the reason that Pedro, who carried *tortillas*, answered the bell, aroused the household and announced meals, presented what seemed to me such an old, unsmiling face for a child.

I shall never forget one detail of that first breakfast. Señor Carlos bowed low, and pinned a spray of orange blossoms on me, and the girls laughed, when I, not realizing its inappropriateness, said "*adios*." Their mother shook her head at them covertly, and, patting me on the cheek, called me "*Hijita Americana*," which means "little American daughter." They had expressed themselves to our mutual friend as eager to learn English, assigning this as their reason for receiving me into their home, for they are a people strangely averse to admitting outsiders to their households. I foresaw that they would learn no English, and they never even

made an attempt after Senor Carlos' first and last effort. He walked up to me one day, and with a sweeping bow, said in English: "Senorita, to-day a full bite. Go?" I should not have understood enough to laugh if I had not already been reading about the big bull-fight. When he realized that he had made a mistake, he laughed too, but never attempted another sentence in English. Señor Carlos never for a moment forgot his elegant manners and bows. He was always as attentive as on that first morning at breakfast, when everything seemed so strange and new to me. Senora asked if I wanted *leche de cabra* or *leche de vaca*, which means goat's milk or cow's milk, but as I couldn't understand, she had me taste a little of each. One almost took my breath away with its strong and peculiar flavor. This I hastily rejected, and wondered how the family could prefer it. I never learned to drink *leche de cabra*.

In the primitive kitchen of every house-

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hold can be seen a *metate*, a ponderous kitchen essential, that is cut from gray stone, and is hollowed out like a shallow pan. The boiled corn for making *tortillas* and *tamales* is crushed in this.

Of course, the cooking was unlike American cooking. The eggs were made into little highly peppered pats, and the steak was so flavored with herbs that I could hardly force it down. Bread, butter and coffee were the only things that seemed natural, and the butter may have been made from goat's milk. My first dinner impressed me even more, so much so that I made out a menu card and sent it home by the next mail.

First, they had consomme, as they called it, though unlike any consomme I had ever eaten. The value of this dish was not enhanced in my eyes when they chopped bananas into it. Then came the funniest jumble of a dish which they call "*cosida*." It was brought in on a big platter, and, as nearly as I could guess, was a concoction of

boiled Irish potatoes chopped in small squares, beets, carrots, small pieces of meat, bits of roasting ear, cauliflower and peaches! I tried to look pleased as I ate it, but I seriously doubt if I did. 'Tis needless to say the flavor was unusual. Then the plates were removed and roast beef served, every conceivable cranny of it filled with raisins—raisins to right of it, raisins to left of it—and they ate this with such evident enjoyment, picking out the raisins carefully on the ends of their forks, that it reminded me of little “Jack Horner” and his plum. I am fond of roast beef, and of raisins, but I confess I prefer them separate.

Next came a salad, which was delicious. It was made of cold sliced tongue, chopped olives, celery and lettuce, with mayonnaise dressing. Then we had boiled roasting ears and *aguacates*—something which is a cross between a fruit and a nut, with flesh that is about the consistency of butter that has been on ice, but so impressed was I with

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their resemblance in color to cuticura ointment that I never learned to eat them.

After this we had cheese and macaroni, liberally sprinkled with red pepper. The inevitable "*frijole*" beans followed this course.

They are served three times a day. This dish is to a Mexican what baked beans are to a Bostonian. These are first boiled tender, then poured into a stew pan of smoking lard; when they have absorbed as much of the grease as possible, they are served.

Fancy the effect this dish would have on the digestion three times a day for three hundred and sixty-five days, or a whole lifetime, I suppose, as I never saw a meal without them.

The next course was a mixture, half bananas, and half boiled sweet potatoes with whipped cream. Then came nuts and several kinds of wine.

Closing my eyes I can see that table before me now. The little boy trotting back

and forth with hot *tortillas*, which if you don't eat will be a stack of ten or twelve by the end of the meal; the pigeons fluttering and cooing about us, and the soft chatter of that musical language, then so strange and unintelligible to me.

CHAPTER III.

MEXICO is well named "the land of the *manaña*." No matter what a person wants it is promised *manaña*, which means "to-morrow." If the laundry is sent it is invariably with the assurance that it will be brought back *manaña*—and usually many *manañas* pass before it is brought back. Señora decided to have a new well dug, as the old one had been in use a hundred and forty years since the house was built for a bride long years in her grave. She sent for the well-digger, and when she asked him how long before he could have it ready, his prompt reply was *manaña*.

Another set expression is *quien sabe* and means "who knows?" This, with a Frenchy

little shrug of the shoulders, is the response to most questions put to *peons*, who, not caring to take the trouble of informing themselves on most subjects find this the easiest way to reply. It is told that an American who did not know the meaning of these two very useful phrases had heard *mañana* frequently. One morning when out for a drive he asked the coachman a number of questions, chiefly concerning some business houses they were passing. The answer each time was, "*Quien sabe?*" Presently a funeral procession passed and he asked "Whose funeral?" "*Quien sabe?*" was the answer. "Thank heavens that old fellow is dead," he said. "I only wish old '*mañana*' would follow him."

"*Vuelvo en un momentito*" (I return in one moment), the Mexican says, extending his hand with thumb and forefinger almost touching, to express how small a time "*un momentito*" is.

With all their shrugs and gesticulations

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the French cannot express half what the Mexicans do by their peculiar gestures. With mouth drawn down at the corners, head to one side, hand extended on the other side, palm upward, they stamp the individual under consideration undeniably "*no bueno*." A tightly clenched fist and squinted eyes convey the idea that he is "*muy apretado*" (very stingy); a little clawing motion says plainly "He is a thief." Mexicans would be helpless without the expression "*no es costumbre*" (it is not the custom).

"*No es costumbre*," a lady will tell you disdainfully, if you diverge a fraction from their most trivial social law—more binding than those of the Medes and Persians.

"*No es costumbre*" is hurled at you by the meekest cook if instructed to pick up a pin aside from the duties designated when she was hired.

One day on the plaza I saw an American, in a spirit of fun, hand a little bootblack a



TAKING A SUN BATH BEFORE THEIR PALM HUT.

big, awkward penny instead of the dainty silver five-cent piece due him. The big eyes filled with tears before he could enter protest with the inevitable "*No es costumbre, Senor, no es costumbre a pager menos que cinco centavos—una centavo nunca, Senor; no es costumbre.*" (It is not the custom to pay less than five cents—one cent never, Mister; it is not the custom.)

These waifs are as precocious and amusing as our little Americans in the same station of life. There was one who never passed me on the plaza without smiling winningly and saying, "Shine, Mister?" in faultless, bootblack English.

They have a way of calling a girl or boy who is the victim of an unrequited love a *calabasa*, which means "pumpkin." Also a person showing jealousy is a *calabasa*.

Old maids go by the euphonious title of *solteras*, and young men are *gallinos* (young roosters). The dude, habituè of street corners in every land, is there called

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"*lagartijo*" (lizard), because he basks so lazily in the sunshine. But how much less disagreeable to be called a *lagartijo* than a dude.

The girls wash their hair every other day in summer, and go into town with it streaming damp, down their backs like mermaids. I asked Concepcion one day if she was not ashamed to do this. "Ashamed?" she asked. "Why should I be ashamed? Every one knows I have to wash my hair." It may be a consequence of the frequent washing or the good airing, but they usually have lovely hair.

On entering a store a Mexican girl shakes hands with every clerk, and if they have been there only two minutes they shake again on leaving. These shopping excursions are usually quite pleasant "*visitas*." The girls take their seats and chat freely for some time before their little hands reach over the counter for "*adios*"; yet under no circumstances would a girl from a repre-

sentative family bow to a clerk on the plazas. Why they are at liberty to chat so openly in the stores together I do not know, unless for practice in conversation.

Shopping is a delight in Mexico. There is a certain amount of pleasure to be derived from such expeditions in the most remote village. What though you can't find everything! There are dainty, lovely "*tiras bordades*" (embroideries) and "*tercio pelo*" (velvet) in every shop, and clerks so glad to haul down endless stacks of things, smiling and flattering you delightfully all the while. The silks and laces from France are a joy to the heart feminine, in their snowy masses and intricate beautiful weaves. Such cobweb patterns are not to be found on this side of the Rio Grande. The stores keep a very limited supply of shoes ("*zapatos*") in larger sizes, for their feet are characteristically tiny, and a clerk will try unhesitatingly to crowd a number four foot into a number two shoe, assuring you it will

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soon stretch and be too large, and seem surprised if they cannot convince you. I spent hours shopping for my "*zapatos*," for, unfortunately, I did not number among those who could wear a Mexican size, and there is nothing Chinese about my idea as to how a shoe should fit.

Their millinery is lovely, but no one less wealthy than a Rothschild would fail to frown at the fabulous prices they ask for the dainty, perishable creations they offer. "*Flores, flores*," but the nominal figure at which flowers can be bought in the streets has nothing to do with the ridiculously high prices of the "*flores*" in a millinery establishment. Hats are a novelty to them yet. It has been such a little time since they knew no headwear but the graceful mantilla.

One day when the ways and the language of the Mexicans was very, very new to me, I went into La Predilecta (The Favorite) to buy a hat. I was full of confidence, and

it never occurred to me that every necessary word was not at my command. But I was helpless when I tried to ask for a winter hat. Where was that word for "winter"?

"Sombrero?" (hat) I asked, timidly.

"Si, si," ("yes, yes"), the obsequious clerk answered, and before I had time to remonstrate, pulled down box after box of summer hats.

"No, no," I objected, "otros sombreros" (other hats). Then he pulled down still more of the gay, beflowered ones. I looked helplessly from side to side for some aid in my dilemma. Pointing to a piece of wool goods I asked:

"Que es esta?" (what is this?) "Lano" (wool), was the answer. "Sombrero lano?" (wool hat) I asked. The clerk tried to hide his mirthful face by stooping under the counter a moment. When he raised himself up he shook his head slowly. "Este?" (This?) I asked, pointing to a piece of silk. "Sedo" (silk), he answered, promptly.

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"Sombrero sedo?" I asked, still more hesitatingly. Again he darted down under the counter, this time for a much longer stay, and the smile was not all gone when he emerged this time. "Sombrero por el frio?" (hat for the cold), I asked, desperately, but he only laughed more and declared that they had no cold there, so I went home and continued to wear my summer hat. As the seasons are not marked they wear summer and winter hats interchangeably.

A clerk bolts over the counter in leap-frog fashion if there is anything in the show cases you wish to see. At the end of a visit he will often give a *regalo* to the customer, which is not often anything more valuable than a cheap little fan, or, perhaps, a bunch of tangled baby ribbon; but they bestow it as if it were a string of pearls. Their stores are all named; also their *cantinas* or saloons. One I saw was called "The Triumph of the Devil." A drug store bore the name "The Gate to

Heaven." No girl takes a position as clerk in Mexico. Even the people at the telephone stations are men. I learned that "*anilla*" means ring; so when I tried to call for 600-2 rings, I said "600 *dos anillas*." At my repeated call the central grew annoyed and hung up the receiver. I afterward learned that *anilla* means only a ring for the finger, and *llamada* means the ring of a telephone.

The way things were delivered always struck me as so ridiculous. A man would come down the narrow little street with a basket on his back, and Luz would hail him and run out to buy her vegetables for the day. Frequently I have seen her purchase one potato, or a half tomato, and the man seemed to think it all right; everybody did, but it would always occur to me how ridiculous an American would seem buying half a tomato. Even wood they buy by the armload, and I have seen a man staggering under the weight of a sideboard or iron

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bed, for they have no moving vans. They even bring trunks from the station on their backs. My mirth knew no bounds when one day a man came leading a goat through the front hall and out to the kitchen. "*Quanto?*" he asked, and Luz replied, "*Diez centavos.*" When he had milked a measure full she paid her dime, and he led his goat on to the next house.

A housekeeper trusts her cook to do all the buying for the kitchen. It is beneath a lady of quality to be seen marketing, so the cook is every day furnished with small change for this, and I really doubt if their wages are so meagre after all, for the poor are not exceedingly scrupulous. It is easier to obtain forgiveness than *tortillas*.

No supplies are kept on hand. Pedro would have to run down to the corner to buy a cornucopia of lard or flour before each meal. No housekeeper is so reckless as to keep even these staples on hand, with so many nimble fingers about. One of Luz'

most eloquent memories was her trip to San Antonio, Texas, where she spent one summer cooking in a hospital at twelve dollars a month. She never tired of telling about it, and her eyes would grow big at the remembrance, when she would clasp her fat brown hands and say "*Mucho dinero por Luz—mucho dinero.*" (Much money for Luz.)

She was called home from this Elysian field by an invalid husband, who had become so ill that, one day she announced to the Señora that she must stay at home with him until he died; adding that he didn't seem to be going to die soon either.

The first day of her absence there was consternation in the household, for a cook couldn't be found. At luncheon hour I offered, in my best Spanish, to help. Not one of them knew a thing about cooking, and I smiled to myself, thinking how they would enjoy my broiled steak, for back in sensible Texas I had attended a practical cooking

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school that was held in my mother's kitchen every day. I made delicious milk toast, creamed some potatoes, and cooked squashes. They thought the word squash, which it was impossible for them to pronounce, as funny as I found "*ropa viejo*" (old clothes), a name they give to a sort of meat pie, a very popular dish, made from scraps of cold meat and smothered in herbs. They thought my skill quite wonderful, particularly the Señora, who had married at thirteen, and had as little culinary knowledge now as then. But they could not enjoy steak cooked without herbs. The Señora, determined not to wound my feelings, took a liberal piece, and, cutting it in bits, poured vinegar over it. And I had expected those poor starved creatures to fall on my delicately broiled steak like hungry wolves.

At dinner time a new cook, innocent of the benefits of a comb and a bath, took



THE "AQUA FRESCA" MAN.

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charge; but we were glad indeed when Luz returned in a few days. She came one morning to get four dollars to go into mourning, for her husband had at last died; her usually round face looked long as she told us of the event. That evening she returned, dressed in a cheap black print which she had bought already made, on the market, and Pedro had a piece of cheap crepe on his hat. In less than a week I heard the old loud happy laugh of Luz, and going out in astonishment, found her teasing Josef, the yardman, telling him that he would be the new husband of Luz.

The day of her husband's death she had much regretted that she was too poor to have funeral notices, but this was now forgotten. Their funeral notices are almost as large as a small newspaper, as are their wedding invitations, which are engraved on a large double sheet of ragged edged linen paper. On the inside, to the left, the groom's family requests your presence; on

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the right, the bride's family extend their invitation.

On New Year's day they send out engraved cards wishing their friends a happy and prosperous year; a family always mails announcement cards at the birth of a child. When it is a month old friends call and scatter *confetti* over the baby's cradle. *Confetti* is bright bits of paper in sacks. I never learned the significance of this custom.

Ladies embrace on meeting and kiss on either cheek. Men embrace and pat each other on the back affectionately.

Certain amusements appeal forcibly to the Mexicans. A circus may with impunity camp in a town for weeks, sure that the tent will be crowded every night. However, the circuses there are superior to anything we have in *Los Estados Unidos*. The great Or-rin circus is always a drawing card. Everybody goes. Fathers do not use their children for excuses, as Americans do, but go eagerly night after night. With as much

time as polish they can thus spend hours very agreeably. Stores are always closed fully two hours for dinner, and, half dozing through the sleepy afternoon the affable clerks are most indifferent to sales. Above all else the theatres there have one inimitable charm—the graceful serpentine play of a shawl in the hands of some dark-eyed *Señorita*—her silken *rebozo* woven in shades seldom seen save in a brilliant sunset—a beautiful careless mingling of hues that harmonize in their very dissimilarity.

There is a quaint little dance called "*Danza de sombrero*," among "*los pobres*," that is most alluring. The *sombrero* or hat is placed on the floor, and a girl and boy dance around it, in and out—darting near—gliding away—their supple bodies swaying as if by a breeze, as they snap their fingers close to the *sombrero* and smile charmingly, tauntingly at each other. 'Tis a beautiful, typical dance, without any seeming significance—the girl in her short bright skirt,

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buckled slippers, and bare brown arms—the boy in blouse, long trousers, and brilliant sash.

What a place of interest a Mexican market is! I went down often and elbowed my way through its throngs. One always sees lots of Americans there shopping, with big market baskets hung independently on their arms. Such a conglomeration of toys—beautiful pottery that costs almost nothing—kitchen utensils, household things, clothes, trinkets—candy made of goat milk and sugar, hats, canes and every imaginable and unimaginable article—a heterogeneous collection of the useful and useless. The air is intoxicatingly sweet with the perfume of flowers and fruits. For a few *centavos* a small boy can gorge to the utmost limit. All the lower class wear sandals, and they gather in hordes to bargain for these. Trousers are sold here all the way from seventy-five cents to seventy-five dollars per pair. The lower class or *peons*, wear such



PATIENTLY AWAITING CUSTOMERS.

1912

1913

1914

1915

odd looking trousers—bright-hued, and as tight as a new kid glove, a size smaller than usual. These they fasten up the sides with colored laces. Of course the upper class buy their wearing apparel from the shops, patronizing the markets only for edibles. Little piles of potatoes, pottery, hay, English peas and various other things obstruct the way—and the venders, sitting patiently beside them with babies galore tumbling over them and scattering the wares, pull at your skirts as you pass and beg you to buy. The first price is always startling, but they will often drop to a tenth of the original. It is amusing to hear them fall and fall in price and at last, with a coaxing toss of the head, inquire what you will give, sometimes even running after you for a block urging you to buy, and laughing good naturedly if you do not.

A temptation I could never resist was to stroll from stall to stall conversing with the keepers. They are so simple, they would

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tell of their joys and sorrows, their babies and their ambitions, which were interesting, if no loftier than to own a *burro*, for the study of human nature is always interesting. One old, wrinkled woman always sat with her rooster under her arm, unless he were fighting; she became one of my staunchest friends. She did not hesitate to tell me that she stole the rooster, "he was such a good fighter," was her excuse, and then she was "*muy pobre*." She would hold the little game fowl up proudly each time for my inspection, as if it had been a baby, instead of a little game *gallo*.

A girl had a stall where she sold only little red and blue pig banks, and remembered me always with such a bright smile, that I almost became bankrupt buying her little pigs. There are few of my friends in the United States who have not a pig bank. Still another vender always slipped a packet of cigarettes into my basket, and refused

pay. A few friendly speeches and smiles had won these lowly admirers.

Small-pox is a great bugbear among Americans as a draw-back to Mexico, but there is really slight danger from this disease. It rages among the slums; their dirty hovels and unhygienic mode of existence invite disease, but the death rate from small-pox and other maladies is not great among cleanly people. The *peons* seem to have little dread of it and I think regard the pits it leaves as rather ornamental. Frequently on the street cars one sees a person all broken out, and here lies the danger. Becoming familiar with the symptoms of the disease a person can avoid contact with one of these victims, and need feel no distress of mind thereafter. Another strange thing that frequently takes place on the street cars. A man will take out his cigarette case, and turning toward the ladies on the car offers every one a cigarette, particularly if there are any American ladies present.

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Often I have passed a woman with her whole nut brown family lined up on the banks of a little stream—unclothed—while she did the weekly or yearly washing.

One day I yielded to the entreaties of the family and went to a bull fight. I shall never quite forgive myself for doing so, though I did not then realize how horrible a Mexican bull fight can be. I am not ashamed that before it was over I came so near fainting they had to sprinkle me with lemonade, the only available liquid, and take me home. I cannot understand how a human being can sit through it, though I stayed long enough to see six bulls and nine bleeding blindfolded horses tortured to death. A magnificent bull comes charging in, infuriated by the stinging arrow he received as he passed under the entrance arch. He vents his fury upon the first object he spies, and when one knows that this is a poor blindfolded horse, a fraction of the cruelty can be realized. The rider pierces

the bull's neck with numberless sharp arrows, and as the horse falls, makes his escape amid the triumphant yells of the immense audience. Sometimes even the little rider meets his death and becomes a hero in the eyes of all present—but a dead hero.

It is all a kind of indistinct horror to me. And yet, when I told Señor Carlos that it was more cowardice than bravery that enabled one to sit through it, he laughed and called me "*Pobrecita*" (poor little girl,) and said it was not half so cruel as prize fighting, which was between human beings.

"Ah, it is grand when you learn to understand it," he said. And a person to hear their shouts of exultation would imagine something of the grandeur of the Passion Play was being presented.

CHAPTER IV.

A "SWELL" wedding took place just before Lent, and I was invited with the family. It was the marriage of a beautiful girl, typically Spanish, and we went early that none of the spectacle might be lost. It was a long and impressive ceremony, and the cathedral was like a flower garden. I blushed for shame at the conduct of some American tourists, who, having gained access to the church, had possessed themselves of some of the best pews, and when the bridal party entered, the bride with bowed head walking slowly to the font of holy water, her glimmering satin train trailing after her, these Americans deliberately stood up in their seats, and the snap, snap of their obtrusive kodaks broke the sacred silence.



Manuel Oliveres

y

Aurilia O de Oliveres

participan a Ud. el próximo enlace de su hijo

Maria,

con el Sr.

Lic. Rafael Treviño

Genoviva L. Vda. de Treviño

participa a Ud. el próximo enlace de su hijo

Rafael,

con la Sra.

Maria Oliveres

y tienen el honor de invitar a Ud. y a su apreciable familia, a la armoniosa recepción que se
celebrará en la Catedral el día 18 del presente mes a las 10 a. m.

Monterrey, Enero de 1900.

Next to the Briton in egotism comes the American, and because they consider themselves essentially pace setters and privileged beings, they disregard many of the customs that Mexicans hold inviolate—customs that we might recognize without detracting from our self-respect or convenience. Frequently troubles arise from this cause that require diplomatic intervention.

After crossing herself and kneeling for a blessing, the stately bride walked the length of the cathedral alone on one side, under the arches of ferns and lilies, and the groom on the other. Meeting at the altar they knelt on satin pillows,—the organ burst forth in soft music, and when the priest had blessed them, he pinned a piece of white ribbon on her shoulder, and crossed it over to her *fiancé*, thus uniting them; at the same time drawing a fold of her gauzy veil about the bridegroom. A lengthy ceremony in Latin followed, to the accompaniment of music. The ribbon was unpinned, a prayer

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offered, and the happy pair marched out to the strains of Mendelssohn's Wedding March,—out and down the long stone walk and rolled away in one of the gay carriages to which were harnessed milk white horses with white ribbon reins and beflowered bridles.

The first point is always the photographer's studio, where pictures are made of them in some adoring attitude. All weddings take place in the early morning, and a bride is never married in anything but white. The day is spent in gaiety, the night in a grand ball, and, the next morning, after the civil ceremony has consummated the marriage, they leave—leave, to learn whether or not they love each other. Alas, that so often it should be a rude awakening—a falling short of expectations, for neither knows a thing of the other's thoughts and ways. What if in the harsh morning light the wife has lost the halo of enchantment that hung over the face be-

hind the iron-barred window. Ah, then 'tis the same old story, and yet they will not believe there is any system of love-making better than theirs that to us seems so unreal and so like child's play, but to them is as sacred as their religion. And yet before marriage one does not see among them the inconstancy that we find among matter-of-fact Americans.

A girl has one lover, nor dares to smile on another. Not more than one man pays court to a girl at once. In her little heart she is as true as steel. To Rosita, dark, demure Rosita of our household, had come a note of strange music—had struck a shaft of rosy light, but 'twas over now, its only footprint being an added wistfulness to the big eyes—for some whispered words against her lover had changed her dreams, and now her evenings are often dreary. 'Tis a land of dreams, and why not, when one can sit in the soft sunlight and float away in fancy upon the depth on depth of blue above.

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One Spaniard told me he spent a year in Detroit, where he made many American friends, but never grew accustomed to the "abominable liberty" of our girls.

"It may not be the custom where your home is, *Señorita*," he told me, "but I have seen girls there from the very best families go out to the theatres with a young man *alone*, not a member of her family with her!" I assured him that I had seen such things myself.

"To us this robs them of all their charm," he said. "I was so happy to return to *Aguas Calientes*, and once more see my sweetheart's face in the window, like an angel's." His face softened at the recollection. Reaching in his pocket he drew a daintily penned letter out and handing it to me, said: "From my *dulce carazon*— I got it to-day."

Some one has said that people who do not know Spanish are unable to express but half their love, and truly there is a caress in

every word of that soft language. I read the adoring little letter to its close, where she said: "The *angelitas*" send their love.

"Who are the *angelitas*?" I asked in wonder.

"Her little ones," he answered.

"But you—you are not married?" I asked.

"No, no, but she is married to a man she doesn't love—she loves me—she has loved me two years," and his handsome face showed no sign of shame nor confusion at the confession.

It is really a tedious matter to become married in Mexico, with the several ceremonies. One interesting feature is that the bridegroom furnishes the *trousseau*. It seems hardly fair, for the poor man has enough of that ahead of him, and as the father naturally supposes it is about the last rifling his daughter can give his pocket, he doesn't mind much, but the Mexicans think differently, and think it well to prepare the

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husband. He sends a check for whatever amount he feels able to give, and she is in honor bound not to use her father's money. It must be rather an embarrassing matter for the bridegroom to decide just how much to send. I knew one girl, a member of a wealthy family, who married a poor man, and when the check came it was a question how she would be able to get her clothes with the amount. I really fear that I should have been tempted to let my father add a little, but she bought an inexpensive wedding dress and simple outfit, thus proving herself very sweet and womanly.

Not infrequently daughters and sons will remain after marriage under the parental roof rather than endure the anguish of breaking these ties; if a son establishes a home of his own no day is ever too short to admit of his making a little *visita* to his mother. The trenchant sword of jealousy strikes at a mother's heart when she feels that the new daughter is supplanting her



"PLAYING THE BEAR."

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in the son's affections. A wife in Mexico is supposed—however young she assumes such responsibilities—to have as good judgment as her husband, and is never subjected to the humiliation of begging a pittance daily for her household needs. A woman of caste there could not be self-sustaining and self-respecting. When a man marries he cheerfully accepts the support of a widowed mother or sister, never considering their accomplishments that might be turned to account.

While on the subject of marriages I must tell all about their courtships, for that of Miles Standish was no stranger. I feel particularly well versed on this subject, as I had a love affair of my own, if such it may be called. One day I noticed whispering among the Señora and the girls, and, as it seemed such a good natured whispering, I begged to know what it was about. Finally dear Señora said "Let's tell her," so they consented, and on account of my limited

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knowledge of the language it took all three to explain that Señor Don Eduardo was in love with me, and it would have taken three more to make me believe it.

"Who is Señor Don Eduardo?" I asked, "and how do you know that he is in love with me?" They told me he was the dark young man we had noticed passing and re-passing the house every day.

"If a young man passes a house several times a day he's in love with some one in it," they said.

"But why not with one of you?" I enquired, looking admiringly into their faces, for both were unusually pretty girls, though I believe I loved Concepcion a little the better.

"Oh, no," they protested, "we have been here all our lives and have always known Señor Don Eduardo, and he has never done this before." They were unwilling to have their romance spoiled. So they told me to walk up and down before the window when

he came, but on no account speak to him. This I obediently did, morning and evening, and Señor Don Eduardo would smile on me most adoringly. There was such novelty in the experience that I played my part quite commendably—at any rate, after three weeks the girls declared they had a *secreto*. I wheedled them until they told me that the Señor was going to send the band to serenade me at midnight, and if I applauded the music it would be an indication that I accepted his suit. It was really unfair to him for me to be told, they said, for I should have been awakened by the strains of music, but I eased their consciences by advising them that if they had not told me I would more than likely have slept throughout the serenade.

At the first stroke of twelve the band began, just under the window, playing "To Thee"—a beautiful love song—then, "*Lagrimas de Amor*" ("Tears of Love,") and others equally tender and pleading; at the

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close I applauded. I could see Señor Don Eduardo listening, hat in hand, in the distant moonlight. To me the whole thing was a little drama that I had thoughtlessly gone into. Even my applause was almost innocent. For several mornings and evenings after this he paraded before my window, whispering such extravagant terms of endearments as "*Angelita*," "*Divina*" and "*Primerosa*," until it is a wonder I didn't lose my head, and become, Spanish-like, a devotee to the mirror.

Then one day there came a noisy rap at the door, and Señor Don Eduardo's card was brought in. When I peeped through the bars I saw his silver mounted victoria in waiting, with his monogram emblazoned on the side. The girls were almost speechless with delight. They regarded themselves in the happy light of matchmakers, and fluttered about me making suggestions and trying to rush me off to array myself in my gayest attire, Rosita in her excitement even

pulling out her favorite of my dresses—a pink flowered silk, and trying to hurry me into it. They told me that this would be an announcement of my acceptance of Señor Don Eduardo, when people saw me driving in his victoria about the Alameda. Then I declined to go further. If I felt any hesitation in going alone, their mother or his mother could go with me, they persisted. His mother had called, and I found her a peculiar, undemonstrative woman, though she had invited me to her home, and seemed desirous of making a good impression. But I was not going for a drive in Eduardo's carriage, because matters had now assumed a more serious aspect than I liked.

So ended my affair with Señor Don Eduardo—at least the pleasant side of it, for he acted very ugly indeed after this. He would stand with a leer on his dark face as I passed, and even dared on several occasions to hiss at me—such a hateful hiss that it could never be confounded with the tender

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"*Angelita*" or "*Divina*" of a few weeks before. Señor Don Eduardo's pride had sustained a blow. He told Señor Carlos that his intention had been to marry the "American Señorita" in four months if she had not turned out a "*coqueta*." When Carlos repeated that accusation his voice had an angry ring, and he seemed much surprised that I could laugh. I didn't know then that to be called a "*coqueta*" in Mexico is much more offensive than in our country. A very handsome man at a ball one evening was promptly refused a dance by Rosita. When at home a few hours later I asked her why this was, she told me he had two sisters who were *coquettas*, and this being the case, why should he be accepted in "*sociedad*?"

One night, as I sat in the window dreaming of home, something was dropped into my lap through the bars, and looking up quickly I saw Señor Don Eduardo disappearing down the silent street. I picked up his *regalo*. It was a long gray card, and in

the upper left-hand corner was a tiny American flag, with streamers of the blessed national red, white and blue. A girlish figure, tall and lithe, occupied the space, a typical American girl dressed in a walking skirt, shirt waist and heavy shoes; attire that is hateful to every Mexican, for in their eyes a woman is only half a woman when she lays aside pretty feminine fripperies and follies. This girl wore no hat, had sunny brown hair blowing about her face, and a carefree laugh on her lips. On her breast, in bold relief, was a tiny black heart. It seemed a little incongruous that such a pretty girl should have a black heart. In one hand she carried a dagger with a crimson one on its point, and over one shoulder was a string of hearts; her path was strewn with them, on which she ruthlessly trod, her head tossed high, watching the one on her dagger's point—the latest victim, I supposed. The whole was rather startling; her trim blue skirt, white waist

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and crimson tie, truly patriotic, and the crimson hearts about her for which her laughing eyes showed no concern, and the black, black heart on her breast. It needed no word "*coquette*" beneath it to show its import. Perhaps I should be ashamed, but I really prized it very much; 'twas most flattering, and certainly displayed artistic talent—which most Mexicans have.

An American boy friend told me a joke on himself. He became much enamored of the face of a Señorita as he passed her window daily and determined to revolutionize their "slow" methods. So, one day, he boldly pounded with the brass knocker at her front door, and was ushered into the parlor and her presence. She blushed prettily, and, bowing low, left the room. In a moment she returned with her father and mother. For a few minutes conversation lagged, then the mother took matters into her own hands and asked him what his

intentions were regarding her daughter. He stammered out that he had none as yet, and, as he expressed it, "picked himself up out of the street a little later, wondering how he got there." Never afterward did he entertain any sentiment for a Mexican Señorita, nor worry over their lack of progressiveness.

A standing joke with Señor Carlos, who was particularly dark, with languid black eyes, was, that he was his mother's only blond child, and therefore her favorite. In their eyes, if a person's skin is fair, all other defects are obliterated, for only the most purely Castilian type escapes the dark olive tint, and even these have a creamy pallor to their complexion that is distinctly foreign. They thought me dazzlingly fair, though I had always lamented my brunette coloring. I remember the first time I went to a ball, when Trinidad had fastened the last hook of my dainty white gown, she clasped her hands with delight, and ran

away to summon the family. They all went into raptures over my "snowy" neck and arms, which I had been powdering freely to make whiter. Luz declared I was a spirit, and, slipping up behind me, timidly kissed my neck. Fair of face, fair of lineage with them, for as the aristocrats are many shades whiter than the "*peons*," a fair complexion is, with them, an unfailing evidence of blue blood. They really admire Americans, though they feel a little jealousy toward us for the way we are entering their country and taking possession of their rights. They pretend to dislike our language, and one Spaniard told me there was but one word of the English language that he liked, this he used often, the word "indeed."

Though one may be willing to credit them with an inimitably pretty language, he is not willing to admit that there is but one word in English to be admired.

CHAPTER V.

CARLOS told me of his love for Elisa, and his eyes glowed with tenderness as he talked. He had once "played the bear," as Americans have termed their parading before a window, to a high class girl, but she was too cold and unresponsive, he told me.

"How do you know this when you are never allowed to talk to her?" I inquired.

"Oh, but her eyes were never full of love like Elisa's are," he explained.

His romantic love for Elisa was a source of great distress to his family, for the girl was beneath them in caste, which is most defined there. They called her a "*tortillera*" (tortilla maker), which, of course, she was not, and his eyes would fill with

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tears as he said "*Pobrecita*." He felt no resentment, only pity for his poor little girl that he thought he loved so well. His sisters begged me to talk to him and try to persuade him to go back to Anita, who loved him yet, "for we will never receive this Elisa—she cannot go in *sociedad* even though she is the wife of Carlos," they declared.

I asked him why he did not return to Anita, for his family's sake, and her own. He shook his head.

"I cannot be the lover of both Elisa and Anita," he said, "and I cannot give Elisa up. If they did not live on the same street——" and he finished with a gloomy shake of his head.

"*Ojos hermosos*" (beautiful eyes), he would murmur softly as he thought of Elisa, a faraway look in his own. "They shall accept her," he declared. "I will take her on my arm, *pobrecita*, and I will walk through that casino, and I will dance every

dance with her when she is my little wife, and you think they will dare not to receive the wife of Carlos?"

One morning I was in the family pew at the Cathedral listening to the "choir invisible," when Señor Carlos slipped in beside me. I looked up in surprise, for he was not religiously inclined. Often a candle burned all day at home before one of the statues of the Virgin Mary, for his sake; his mother worried no little over her son's indifference to the religion of his forefathers; so my astonishment was natural. Still more surprised was I when he began to tell me how much he loved me. "*Tu tienes mucha mas inteligencia y mas dignidad que las muchachas Mexicanas, todas de las muchachas Americanas tienen.*" ("Thou hast much more intellect and more dignity than Mexican girls—all American girls have.")

"Then," I said, "do you tell me this, Señor Carlos, after I have heard you talk of Elisa

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so often? And in the cathedral! I am disappointed in you, miserably disappointed."

I laid my hand on his arm, and, looking straight at him, said: "Let's forget you have ever said this—that you have ever for a moment been untrue to Elisa, whose heart you have won. Continue to be my brother, Carlos, and I shall be happy—poor little Elisa!" Just a moment of surprise then Señor Carlos shook hands with me warmly and said in his pretty tongue:

"I thank you, Señorita. I will be true to my little girl. I thought I loved you, but I am your brother, am I not? And you—you shall be my bridesmaid when I marry Elisa—now that you know that I love her you will not try to send me back to Anita, will you?" And with one of his radiant smiles he was gone. Is it any wonder that they are an anomaly as a race? Some harsh critic described the country as "A land whose flowers have no perfume—men no honor and women no virtue." I think his



MY INNOCENT MAID—TRINIDAD.

epitome entirely too severe, though. 'Tis a country with many superior charms that cannot but be felt by the mere tourist.

From that time on Señor Carlos never for a moment fancied any display of sentiment due me, and never forgot the brotherly attitude we had agreed upon.

The "*peons*" have a happier, freer time than the aristocrats. They are decidedly bohemian. It was one of my favorite pastimes to sit on the sunshiny plaza near a *banca*, on which sat a pair of plebeian lovers, and hear their pretty love-making. I felt no more compunction of conscience for this than for listening near a confessional. They always reminded me of a pair of modest, happy doves; their love is as sweet as their music. "*Tu no me amas*" (Thou dost not love me) I would hear the probable Conchita murmur, and then his tender assurance to the contrary. There they would sit in happy oblivion of all about them, with no thought but of the perfect present, no anx-

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iety over the proximity of the "*Americano*." The higher class laugh merrily about the plebeians and their love affairs, never realizing that they themselves are missing the best of life, that "The light of the whole world dies when love is done," and love is usually done there before it has hardly begun.

My first ball I enjoyed supremely. We all went, the Señora and her three daughters, for she insisted that I, too, was her daughter. Carlos never went. He had quit attending balls since Elisa had come into his life, because he knew that she would not be welcomed at the Casino, and he did not care to go where he could not look into those beloved dark eyes. On this occasion I was the only American in the house. At the midnight supper a gay bachelor arose, and, bowing low, handed me a bouquet of *La France* roses, saying in perfect English "Señorita, I love you. Señorita, you make me tired." Undignified as it was to do so, I

shrieked with laughter, and tried to explain his mistake to him. The poor fellow had thought he was paying me a great compliment in chance English he had picked up. Several toasts were drunk to the "*Americano*," until I indeed felt that "It is better to be an American than to be a King." This though had been the uppermost feeling with me since I came from my Texan home into this strange land.

By the beginning of Lent I began to consider myself fairly versatile in Spanish. Residence in a family that speaks nothing but that language is the best way to learn it.

The Lenten season was one of absorbing interest. The streets were thronged daily with people going to and from church, and I loved to slip into the great cool Cathedral and take my seat close to a confessional where I would listen to a recital of their multifarious transgressions. One day Concepcion came out of her room dressed all in black—even her face draped, carrying a

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rosary, looking very sweet and demure, and made the announcement that she was going to confess her sins.

"What sins?" I asked, wondering what that sweet dark-eyed girl had to confess.

"Oh, my many sins; criticising my friends and loving pretty clothes too well, and sometimes—sometimes speaking crossly to my *Mamacita*," and kissing *Mamacita's* hand she was gone. This is a pet name with them for mamma.

There is one day of Lent that every person must wear black. It looks strange to see the hundreds of hurrying black figures in the streets. I saw a mother with a little child, a baby girl not more than two years old, kneeling before the Virgin Mary in the Cathedral, its little hands clasped, learning to lisp a prayer. I could no longer feel surprised that the entire nation is Catholic, when it is instilled into them from the cradle to the grave. The week before Easter is more full of interest than any other

time. On the day before Easter Judas Iscariot is burned in effigy on every street corner and in every home that is able to provide one. He is made of *papier mache* filled with explosives, and can be bought any size at the market for less than thirty pieces of silver. A particularly spiritual-minded household will have a life-sized Judas. In the streets the "*peons*" assemble with a huge one that their carefully hoarded pennies have purchased, and frequently they will also have a Mrs. Judas, dressed gaily in pink tissue paper. These they suspend high in the air, touch them off and shriek with derision at their contortions. The reports all day are deafening, and it seems to be a day of supreme pleasure among all classes. The family where I boarded were very quiet with their Judas bonfire, and I saw nothing of him, unless he was inside a long, peculiar shaped parcel that I saw Señor Carlos bring in one day.

Mrs. Judas looks so pretty and innocent

in her fluffy attire that one dares to hope she was not in the conspiracy at all. The day before Easter, to add to the deafening uproar and jubilee, the *matraca* is started. It is a big wooden machine in the tower of the Cathedral with a wheel inside which grinds against the walls, and of all the whirring, grating, unearthly sounds one ever heard, this is the worst. All day long it grinds till you are almost deafened by the sound. This day no bells are rung, which seems strange after the hundreds that have been making the air musical for weeks.

A whole day I spent, going from Cathedral to Cathedral, even to a tiny church on the far outskirts of the city. The sights were startling. Though similar at all the churches, at the grand Cathedral the scene was most harrowing. In the centre aisle was a coffin in which lay a waxen figure of Christ, the eye sockets empty and bloody, the nail holes gaping in bleeding hands, and an expression of the most exquisite suffer-



CATHEDRAL DE SAN FERNANDO.

ing on his face. Beside the bier stood the Virgin Mary, clothed in black, a pale waxen figure, with tears on the anguished face; a person is filled with wonder as to how they can make so painfully realistic the tears, the suffering faces, and the bleeding body of Christ. There is literally weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth among the distressed populace that looks on this scene with morbid horror. So natural did it look that I shuddered and turned away involuntarily, and thought what it must be to them, steeped in ignorance and superstition, and believing, heart and soul, in the good of such a ceremony. They wring their hands and cry aloud, a very Bedlam of sorrowing voices in every church. Even the little children were wailing with their parents.

Superstition reigns supreme in Mexico—particularly among "*los pobres*." When building a fire they make the sign of a cross in front of the oven. In killing a chicken they pull its head off and make the sign of

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he cross on the ground with its neck, declaring that the chicken cannot jump from that spot. A child slow to talk is fed on boiled swallows. Colored glass beads ground fine are administered for paralysis. Candles are always burned in times of illness or misfortune. The penchant for ceremonious display is national. Gay flowers, Chinese lanterns, flags and brightly attired throngs, are in evidence on every great day.

Near every town of any size there is a sacred mountain on the top of which is a black cross. One who has been unusually wicked, and possesses a sufficiently sensitive conscience to direct it, climbs on bared knees to the top of that mountain, begs forgiveness at the foot of the cross, then descends over the sharp stones to the base of the mountain. The penitent is usually so exhausted after the several days of physical and mental exertion and prolonged fasting that ministering friends have to assist him or her home. It is a

pitiful, suffering religion, so full of humanism. They often travel for miles to do this penance, and though they lie in bed for days afterward with lacerated knees, their souls seem so spotless they feel repaid. One day a poor mother with a perfect brood of children came to beg from Señora; all the children were dressed in tatters except one little timid girl about three years old, who wore a simple, clean white dress. I asked the cause of so great a difference in their appearance, and was told that a priest had designated her to be the sanctified member of her household; she must never be allowed to wear anything but white.

This chosen child always receives the best of everything, and is not allowed to play like the other children, but set aside like something holy. I think the little thing must feel rather unhappy, and believe with Mark Twain: "Be good and you will be lonesome."

The children generally lead such a happy

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romping life, tumbling over the sidewalks or riding a half dozen at a time on one stubborn little burro.

The "*peon*" family spends most of the time in the streets, peddling any little article they may have, or lounging lazily about the plazas, while the children enjoy life. They clamber on to the passing street-car, (for which the driver gives them a sharp cut with his whip,) steal from the near-by fruit-seller, and chase every wheel they see.

A bicycle is a source of unending curiosity to these people. I heard of a party of Americans who were invited to a ball on a *hacienda* or ranch. They sailed out independently on their wheels, and a kindly disposed serving woman took the name of each one on a separate card as they entered—for what reason they did not question. When they started home, each found a card neatly pinned on the back tire, the tire as flat as it could well be. I think they decided to spend the night on the ranch.



PEDRO WITH THE NINA OF LUZ.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE was a dear little bright-eyed Mexican baby living opposite us, whose nurse brought it out on the sidewalk every afternoon dressed in glaring pink. It would laugh and coo when it spied me, and, greatly flattered, I decided to go over and make friends with little Miss Teresita. She immediately held out her hands for me to take her in my arms, which I did. To my dismay I perceived that her ears were not as shell-like as they might be, and there was an unmistakable necklace of dirt about her little throat, so I hastily handed her back to the nurse with a forced smile, and went home. The Señora asked me why I stayed no longer.

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"Because the baby was not clean," I answered in my elearest Spanish.

"Oh, you are mistaken," the Señora assured me. "I know her mother and she is very careful with her baby. She bathes it every week."

The "*peon*" class are positively feline in their dread of water. It is a religious duty to bathe on the twenty-fourth day of June, and it is a well authenticated fact that this is the only bath most of the poorer class take during the year.

Firmly do the *pobres* believe that this bath on *el dia de San Juan Bautista* brings beauty to the maiden, vigor to the matron, and freshness to the old maid.

One who has been among them does not find this hard to believe. Josef, our yard man, said to me that "Americans are like fish; they love water." I asked him if he were going down for a bath on the twenty-fourth. "Oh, yes, I always do," he assured me. We went to watch them, and while a



EXTRACTING THE FAVORITE PULQUE.—THE CURSE OF THE PEON.

trifle embarrassing, it was a very amusing spectacle. When the men filed into the river, their wives, or some attentive female, would proceed to wash their clothes and lay them out to dry. The bath was necessarily a long soaking one, waiting for the clothes. When all the men had arrayed themselves in their fresh linen and departed, the women put the children in and then began to disrobe——

But we left just then!

Next day I asked Josef about his bath.

"I was sick, Señorita," he said mournfully. "But I will bathe next June."

It never seemed to occur to Josef that a bath on any other day would be as clean.

They peddle the oddest things in the street. A glass of their native burning *pulque*, so loved by all, *aqua fresca* (fresh water), or dingy looking lemonade, can be purchased on any corner, or even boiled roasting ears and baked sweet potatoes. During Lent the business is thriving, for the streets are full of people who make a

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dinner of a boiled roasting ear and feel thankful to get it. Fruit of all kinds is plentiful in every part of Mexico at all times. *Mangoes, zipotes, aguacates, oranges, bananas* and others, with such long names that I never learned to pronounce them. Such delicious figs and grapes! One would almost live there for them alone. It is interesting to watch a "*peon's*" way of buying. He will go up to a fruit stand, drop a *centavo* and, without a word, take a *mango* or orange, though perhaps the vender had expected to receive more for the article. The "*peon*" sets his own price.

Little boys can be seen in the streets with a string of steaks to deliver, which they do not hesitate to use as a whip on the first mongrel dog they meet, delighted at his yelp of surprise. Later you get one of these same steaks for supper.

The way the poor dress, or rather, *don't* dress, is appalling. Such tatters as the veriest ragamuffin in the States would

scorn, are to them princely attire; in fact, some of them are so indifferent to their needs from a standpoint of modesty—so prone to return to the days of fig leaves—that it is positively embarrassing.

These people will throng the churches at Lent, and weep loudest of all, feeling no hesitation in calling attention to themselves. Modesty in Mexico is a quality conspicuous for its absence. My cheeks often burned while listening to their conversation, and the Señora would shake her head, saying, even to Señor Carlos, "We must not forget the Señorita; she has so much false modesty, but she can't help it—all Americans have."

On Easter eve Señora invited me to go with them to church, and I, of course, accepted. They made me dress in black, and put a lace mantilla on me to which I objected, because it seemed sacrilegious, and, besides, made me look like a widow; but they made me keep it on, telling me that I must

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not wear a hat at that service. First we went to a little chapel near their home. Everything was confusion there. In the aisle the body of Christ lay in state as elsewhere, and all the people were weeping. Some little girls in white passed a lighted candle to each of us, and Concepcion giggled under her mantilla, trying to pull me down on my knees. Even while the beads of her rosary slipped through her fingers and her lips moved in prayer, she was smiling brightly up at me.

Soon she took my hand and led me out, first stopping at the font to cross herself and me with holy water. Then we proceeded to the Cathedral, and went through a like ceremony. The figures of Christ and the Virgin Mary looked more ghastly than ever in the bright light there, and the grief was accordingly more noisy. On the outside the Cathedral was a vision of glory. All about the edges of the roof were burning candles about three inches apart. In the

belfry the entire surface was studded with them, until it looked like myriads of sparkling diamonds. From all the hotels people assembled to gaze upon this beautiful picture. The next morning I was awakened by glad bells on every side—all the bells in the Cathedral tower were ringing at once, and no one seemed to know how many there were, all a different size, so that the sound was a commingling of pretty tones. Every bell in the city was ringing nearly all day, with only brief pauses.

The Virgin Mary now wore robes of mazarine blue. The mystic tears were gone, for Christ was risen. He looked down lovingly on his benighted followers with eyes that were yesterday so harrowingly absent. The scene was a glad one and every face beamed with happiness. The choir boys sang joyously as they scattered sweet incense, and the priests in royal purple velvet robes looked unusually well-fed. Nuns are not

allowed in Mexico, but their priests are the objects of great reverence.

Every household is appointed a pauper to feed. A tottering old woman came to our house every day for her dinner; this was the only meal she had. When the girls would hear her faltering step in the hall they would call out a welcome to the "*viejita*," which means "little old one." 'Twas so pathetic to see her go into the kitchen and crouch down on the dirt floor to await her food. Some days she would be too ill to come, and would go hungry.

The Spanish all have patron saints, for whom they are named, and this saint's day is more observed than a person's birthday. It was a source of wonder and pity to the Señora that I had no patron saint. What could my parents have been thinking about, she said, to give me the name of no saint. She even urged me to add the name of a saint to mine and celebrate the day, declaring she would be afraid to die with no saint



THE BLIND LEAD THE BLIND.

to protect her. Their reverence for religion is beautiful. A car driver always bares his head upon passing a church if it be a hundred times a day, and poor old cripples crawling past the Cathedral pause to cross themselves.

Some days I would just wander in the streets trying to see what I could see. I remember one afternoon particularly. I was homesick—desperately homesick, and thought to shake it off by a ramble among these ever interesting people, where there is something new to see every day. This time I had about mastered my emotions, and was watching a man lead a pig along the sidewalk by a string—a rebellious pig, that made a dash for every open door-way, and almost upset a millinery establishment in less than two minutes, arousing the risibilities of every one near except the owner of the establishment and the owner of the pig.

I was laughing, too, when I heard the most melancholy strains of music. Glancing

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about me I spied a grimy little boy perched on the pavement playing a harp—utterly oblivious to all about him, playing “After the Ball,” more full of pathos than Charles Harris, the composer, with all his morbid conception of sorrow, could have conceived. I never heard anything sweeter than that little piece drawn from a crude harp that cost only a few pennies. I wondered if the youthful musician guessed that he was making a lonely American girl’s eyes swim with tears till she couldn’t see her way. I left him, still playing his little song, and retraced my steps with an emptier void in my heart and a cry from my heartsick soul for home.

Joaquin Miller said of Mexico: “It is Italy and France and the best part of Spain tied up together in one bunch of rapturous fragrance.” The climate is always perfect—to an American healthfully, delightfully soothing, yet a Mexican, swathed from eyes

to toes in a blanket will tell you this is "*por el aire*," (on account of the air).

"Fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." Aside from the pleasure of speaking the musical language I now conscientiously chat with every passing *tamale* man, for I know how dear the sound of his own tongue, when far from his *tierra*. Never shall I forget one day soon after my arrival, when I was lying in my room thinking how strange the jargon, half Indian, half Spanish, of the old cook sounded when I heard a burly American voice say "See here, these pipes are 'busted' and no one on the place can understand me." I appeared in a moment to enjoy the privilege of directing him, and of hearing him speak our substantial language. I don't believe I should have cared much if he had sworn—in English! Send the coldest hearted American, seemingly devoid of love of country, beyond the line where the last English is heard, and, if "Home, Sweet Home" doesn't bring tears to

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his eyes, he is hopeless. Nothing so intensifies the love of our native land as abandonment of it. A peep into the charming home of our American Consul-General will corroborate this. Old Glory waves from every possible place, the walls are draped with it because they love it so. A treat lies in store for every American visitor that is so fortunate as to meet the American Consul-General and his lovely young wife.

The music of Mexico is a source of constant pleasure, but the melody that made me ready to shout for joy was, "A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night," played by an American football team passing through. The roar of appreciation from the assembled Americans was deafening. Let those laugh who will. I would that all who think thus would bid good-bye to every familiar face, manner and word, and go away to live among foreigners. Surely they will go to scoff and remain to weep.

One day I saw an old "*peon*" go up and

beg for one of the ever popular *tamales*, from a woman sitting on the pavement. She refused the request. Nothing daunted, he coaxed and teased the old hag, but she remained firm until he playfully tilted up her chin and kissed her. Then she gratefully handed him a *tamale*; so fond are they of this delicacy that I do not believe he thought his price too high.

It always sounded so funny to hear those tiny brown children prattling Spanish, for they learn to talk sooner than American babies, their language is so easy to learn. But funnier still is it to hear the chatter of the parrots in the markets, that speak with all the rolling pronunciation of their instructors, who, for four dollars in their money, will gladly part with one. They sell easily, but do not bring as good a price as the little *Chihuahua* dog, which is so small that a man can stick one in his pocket, and avoid the duty at the border,

whereas a parrot would scream vociferously at such an indignity.

What trouble people do get into for smuggling! A bridal pair I knew, who tried to hide some of the native drawn work in their trunks, were arrested, and made to pay five hundred dollars American money before they were allowed to leave Laredo. The saddest part of the situation was that they had to telegraph to the bride's father for the money. The bridegroom exacted a promise from his wife that as long as she lived she would never allow a piece of drawn work to be seen in their home. People are caught daily trying to smuggle. One clever woman was discovered with her pompadour filled with opals; still another tried to wear a bustle made of a handsome drawn-work table cloth. The officials were too well up on fashion, though, for her. This woman—looking like a picture from Godey's Magazine with her huge bustle—was directed to interview the inspectress; consequently the

handsome cloth never decked her table, and when she was allowed to proceed on her journey it was with a much lightened purse. People would better decide not to be too clever around the ever alert officials.

That examination at the border is by no means a myth. The train stops, and first a quiet woman with a mantilla over her head comes through the coach and makes known that she is the inspectress. Every satchel must be opened and its contents displayed. It depends entirely on her humor whether every article must come out. If suspicious, she demands a glimpse of even your toothbrush, and may peep into your powder box.

Then everyone gets off the train and goes into the baggage room, where inspectors and inspectresses wait to swoop down on the trunks like Assyrian wolves on the fold. You are allowed to open your own trunk and watch the examination, and if you can say a few pleasant words in Spanish, so much the better. Sometimes the scrutiny is

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superficial, sometimes every garment will be held up to the eyes of the public, the hose unrolled and the inspectress' hands run into them even. It is amusing to watch the different expressions of the inspected. All have been advised to look indifferent, and the efforts are almost ludicrous. A man with several boxes of cigars down deep in his trunk will look away whistling, but an occasional glance out of the corner of his eye says plainly that he is not at ease. Others will be entirely too ingratiating, and still others tremble with fear—but I found that innocence is the very best safeguard.

To go to "*la campana*" (the country) is a source of unmixed joy to a Mexican. Often we used to order up a burro each and, strapping on a blanket and the few essentials for camping out, would be off for "*la campana*." Far out among the silent mountains we would pass the summer home of the governor, a beautiful retreat that he loved more than his mansion in town.

Once, when he was there, we stopped for several days—delightful days, buried from view in that perfect spot. Wide, cool, stone galleries, luxuriant growth of all kinds, and the Southern hospitality of the governor, combined to make the days most pleasant, but even this could not long hold us. We must go away further into oblivion and camp in some sunshiny spot on the bank of a babbling little brooklet where all day birds warbled sweetly in the palm trees, lizards basked in the sunshine, and we lay in blissful idleness, enjoying the wonders of nature here, for Mexicans never tire of the matchless beauties of their land.

Occasionally we would hear the tread of a sandaled foot and spy a *pulque* man with his pigskin pouch making his way to some pulque plant to extract the beloved beverage. Far away and lonely he seemed, but as undisturbed as the birds and lizards by our intrusion. There was nothing in his

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life but to extract pulque to sell to his fellowmen for the downfall of their morals.

Away in those sylvan shades of palms and waving bananas is found a deadly little plant. It is an opiate, joy giving in its effect for a time, but whose insidious poison gradually permeates the system, until the poor creature, smoking the little herb, (for 'tis thus its poison is imbibed,) one day helplessly bats his or her eyes, fights for light, then learns that no ray of light is ever again to come to the poor mortal. Nor is this all. Soon all his faculties are gone, and they tell you he is "*locoed*" (crazed), and until death releases the poor creature he sits (there hour by hour, screaming in weird laughter one frightful peal after another, mirthless as blood-curdling. It seems incongruous that such gruesome possibilities could be contained in this pretty little fragrant plant. Not only troubled human beings seek its solace; often a poor dumb animal, strangely lacking in the instinct of

self-preservation, will become inoculated with the poison, dying the same frightful death. 'Tis the bitter amid the sweet.

Never before had I cared to live in the country, but there the fascination, the attractiveness of a home scene, a lowly home scene, impressed me as some are impressed by looking from a bridge down upon mighty waters. I felt that I must become a part of this life, leaving the old behind.

I longed to join the home circle, and always left with a sense of something lacking, after the contemplation of one of those peaceful scenes—a little adobe house nestling among the hills—flowers blossoming about it—birds carolling in the trees and nearly always a contented woman with a sleeping baby in her arms.

Coming in one day suddenly I discovered the Señora and her daughters smoking cigarettes, which they quickly threw behind the settee. I knew smoking was customary but I didn't believe this family indulged in

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it. At the theatres the men smoke so that the room is in a cloud most of the time during the play.

The women in Northern Mexico are becoming a little ashamed of the practice, and are secretive about it. American ways are beginning to be adopted. Some ladies are even laying aside their pretty mantillas on the plazas and wearing hats; the more loyal ones, however, look as sweet and coy as their mothers, and their mother's mothers looked.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Mexicans are a happy people in their home life. But with all their love for home they have no word in their language expressive of its tender meaning. *Casa* the word they use means merely house. They are finished in the delicate art of evasion. A secret is a secret which all the powers of earth could not extract. After the time spent in sleep and at the table, the hours to be spent in other occupations are not many, for they remain at the table exchanging news and pleasantries more than an hour each meal, and when one considers how many meals they have this is no mean length of time. Señor Carlos always got out his guitar at twilight, and sang for us,

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songs full of love, every note a sigh. Both the girls played the mandolin, and the Señora played both the piano and the guitar, so there was no dearth of music. Every Mexican girl plays a mandolin. Her education is not considered complete without it. No *jacal* is so humble but that the tinkle of the mandolin may be heard within its adobe walls.

They learned our "Home, Sweet Home," and played it with so much tenderness that I invariably listened with tear-dimmed eyes. But most of all they enjoyed coon songs. I had always thought these undignified, but one evening when I had played everything I could think of I struck up "Miss Ambolina Snow." They were delighted, for to them "*las negritas*" are as interesting as monkeys. One sees no negroes there, unless it is the few very stylishly dressed ones that flaunt through the streets with their heads held higher than anyone about them.

So every evening they would insist on

hearing music of "*Las negritas*," and giggled at every word I sang, although they could not understand. Señor Carlos called his sister Rosita "*la negrita*," because she was so dark, and had such big black eyes, and the cognomen never failed to arouse her resentment. She frequently so far forgot herself as to throw a *tortilla* across the table at her brother, Señora protesting: "*Niñas, niñas*" (children, children). Carlos was a dreadful tease, though. The Señora had the most brilliant coloring for a woman of her age, and he would pat her face and declare his mother was an artist in painting. But what Carlos said was always perfect in his mother's eyes.

I never wearied of hearing about Señora's romantic marriage. She, now such a stately woman, had married a man of thirty-five, a governor. She was a child then, just thirteen, and the pictures of her taken on that day are sweetly innocent and lovely. Around her slender throat is a rope of pearls, and the

childish hands wear the old family wedding ring and the engagement solitaire, so young for such emblems of responsibility. She had brought all her dolls with her, and had been displeased because one had not been allowed to lie in her lap in the picture. For a time she amused herself sewing for her dolls, refusing even to return her calls. Soon, however, she tired of the great lonely house, and her toys, and did not hesitate to say so, and, despairing of managing the servants, cried to go home. So he took her back to spend a few weeks, her mother returning with her to the new home. She stood "With very reluctant feet—where womanhood and childhood meet." Yet, many of the girls there, of all classes, assume such responsibilities at this early age.

In this old house of memories, that had been standing more than a hundred years mice and cockroaches abounded. Every few weeks the girls and their mother would

start on a tour of the house ridding it of these unwelcome tenants. This they did not trust to the servants. For some reason the girls imagined they must remove their stockings for the fray, and wear only their little slippers, which were so small they looked as if they might have belonged to Cinderella.

It was great fun to watch this game, for such they made it. With skirts lifted high they would give chase, and if the mouse came their way they struck at it with a broom, made for the nearest chair, and shrieked as women will the world over for a mouse.

This was the only work they did, week in and week out. Almost the whole afternoon was passed in slumber, and afterward came "*visitas*" or shopping, or that endless pacing around the plaza. They never tire of this if they live single till they are forty. After marriage they do not come to the plaza so much. Of course, during the hon-

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eymoon, they do not miss this opportunity for dress parade. Nothing could be more demure and coquettish than Rosita in her plaza attire, with always a sparkling fan-chain—and who knows so well how to wield a fan as a Spanish maiden? Her black hair she wears high on her head with a tortoise-shell comb over which she drapes her soft mantilla, and peeps from beneath it with the most bewitchingly conscious air one can imagine. She manages with inimitable grace her beruffled skirts, the mantilla, and her fan; nor ever forgets a certain toss of her head, so coy that people sit and watch for her to pass—her tiny high-heeled shoes clicking daintily on the stone walk—a Mexican girl whom it would be easy for the most invulnerable American to lose his heart to. The conscious air and the elusive coquettish manner harmonize so perfectly with all else in that land of dreams. Mexicans put on mourning for the most remote relative.

One evening I found Concepcion, a sombre figure in black, crying. She told me that a cousin of hers had just died, but when I tried to comfort her, she said:

"Oh, I'm not crying for that. I didn't know him. I'm crying because I have to wear this ugly black a month, and can't go on the plaza."

As a people they do not believe in each other. A mother questions her daughter's word, and a daughter doubts her mother. One evening when I came home Señora asked me if I had seen her girls on the plaza. I said "No," thoughtlessly, for I hadn't noticed. When they came I heard a volley of as harsh words as their language can express, and Señora saying: "*Mentira, mentira,*" which, in pure nervous English, is liar. Concepcion slipped up to me and said in her excitable little voice:

"Why in the world didn't you say you saw us on the plaza? She will never believe us now."

It seemed to me so strange that a mother as devoted as theirs could doubt the statement of her grown daughters. It is said that a Spaniard's surveillance of his wife is unceasing—with the eye of a hawk he watches her every movement, and yet I have seen the stealthy exchange of missives on the plaza, times innumerable, between people I knew were supposed to be happily married, to some one else. This is why one man has written of them, "A land whose flowers have no perfume, men no honor, and women no virtue."

Yet how can one blame them, with their foolish customs. To them the iron-barred window with the face behind is the shrine before which they worship. Between lovers there has never been a conversation perhaps until engaged, and they meet after the engagement only in the presence of the girl's family, so that they are necessarily mere strangers on the day they become husband and wife. Even at balls, between

dances, a young man leaves his partner immediately and usually goes from the room to smoke until the next number. And their dancing is such a rapid, pretty whirl, that, although they make the most of the opportunity, there is small chance for conversation.

One night a young man sat behind me in the ball room and discussed me with a friend in painfully audible tones

"Isn't the Señorita beautiful—her hair is like sunshine, and her eyes—did you ever see such eyes?" were the kind of remarks that came to me, and made me wonderfully uncomfortable and indignant. I tried to persuade myself that they didn't know who I was, until he leaned nearer me and said even more distinctly:

"She is divinely tall—don't you think so? Most Americans are."

A little later he rushed up to my partner and said:

"I wish to meet the *Americano*." This is

no uncommon way for them to request an introduction, but my turn had come.

"I regret, Señor, that my acquaintance is already sufficiently large," I said, and started to turn away, but he stepped in front of me, with an amazed expression on his face. I saw that he did not understand my action so I reminded him of his conduct of a moment earlier. He seemed even more astonished.

"Am I then not to say so if I like your looks?" he asked.

"I prefer that you should refrain from doing so in my hearing," I answered him.

"You mean to tell me that you are displeased because I admire your hair and eyes? Truly, Señorita, you are an exceptional woman. But I beg your pardon, if that's what you wish, though I know not why I should. Will you dance with me?" he concluded.

"I'd rather not, if you cannot see wherein you have erred."

"Oh, Señorita, I see from your standpoint, but you Americans are so peculiar and hard to understand. Will you not pardon me this once?" So I did. And 'tis a fact that their women are most pleased with such flattery. While a man dare not walk with one alone in the street he is no less a gentleman if he says something flattering as she passes—not to her but of her.

On the street it really is most annoying the way they do. A man will deliberately turn and exclaim "*Que hermosa!*" ("how beautiful,") and feel that he has paid you the highest tribute. They sometimes even stop their carriage and follow a girl out of sight with their eyes. It is useless to resent it, for the lesson would have to be taught to the entire masculine portion of the Republic, who know from experience that flattery is the open sesame to a Señorita's favor. Señor Carlos had a friend who used to come to see him every few days—'twas another

"Damon and Pythias" devotion. This friend began to bring a box of "*dulces*" to me each visit, and watch me more each time and make little side remarks to the family that I could not but see were favorable. One day he said to Carlos in my presence: "I wish I had seen the Señorita three years ago, before I married." I was greatly surprised, for he was such a slender, youthful looking man, with such a boyish face. I did not go into the parlor the next time he came, and he sent word to me, "Please to come." But I pleaded the time-worn excuse of a headache, and then he sent me a little note in his best English, of which he was very proud. It ran:

"SEÑORITA;

"No stars shine in my heaven this day.
Your eyes are my stars. Without them I
have no light. May I be lonely?

"ENRIQUE."

Beneath the signature of every letter, however informal, there is a sort of peculiar flourish—the more elaborate, the better. Without it no note has any importance. This “*rubica*” is taught at school. Always before giving away a photograph they inscribe on the back some pretty verse or sentiment. In the dainty little hand with the “*rubica*” particularly elaborate Rosita wrote on the picture that she gave me:

“A tu, mi predilecta de todas otras, la mas hermosa y divina. ROSITA.”

Which translated is: “To thee, my favorite of all others, the most beautiful and divine. ROSITA.”

One day I missed my watch, the favorite of all my belongings, and I turned my room upside down before I gave the alarm. The servants were arraigned, one by one, and unhesitatingly accused by the family. Each denied it. In fact, I don't believe there was

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a servant in the house who knew I had a watch at all. I felt quite sure that Trinidad, my maid, was guilty, but her tearful face and heartrending protestations of innocence made me feel like a culprit myself.

"How can you believe I could steal your watch, Señorita, when you have been so good to me and have given me so many pretty things?" she would say tearfully.

So I let Trinidad go, and even begged her pardon. Of course, I cried over the loss of my watch, and it was many months before I recovered it. A friend discovered it in one of the many pawnshops, and it had been left there by a girl whose name was Trinidad Garcia de Calzado. So my "innocent" maid was guilty.

The government has a pawnshop in every city. It is called the "*Monte de Piedad*," or "Mountain of Piety," and is really a godsend to the *peons*, who can borrow money on anything there. It is a nice place to visit. There are carriages of the richest with tags

hung over the monograms, cradles of the poorest, with no monograms to hide—dresses, machines and anything but live stock, at this *Monte de Piedad*. The interest on the loan is small, and when the time has run out with the article unredeemed it is sold and the price, less the loan and interest, returned to the original owner. Rare old jewels can be picked up there for a song. I knew a man who bought a blue fan made in 1300 of something like pearl which cost him thirty dollars Mexican money; in a few days he refused an offer of a hundred dollars in gold for it.

The *peons'* propensity for purloining is not exaggerated. They carry long hooks, which they use for dragging counterpanes off a bed or a rug from a propitious spot in the room; they literally "hook" any article they can, and there are many accessible things to be reached through the iron windows. They are professional beggars, commencing it from the day they can lisp out

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"un centavo," and never attain an age at which they are ashamed to beg.

Adults are restricted to Saturday as a day for begging, and though they use all days, if a person cares to be so heartless, he can have one arrested for doing so. Such distressing numbers of cripples as one encounters! Some claim that children are crippled by their guardians in order that they may be more successful beggars. This though is hard to believe, as one of their admirable traits is their love for their children, and they do have such scope for an exhibition of this love in their enormous families.

There are no tennis courts nor golf links among the Spanish. No basket-ball teams nor bicycle clubs to give a healthful rose tint to the cheeks; the soft olive of their skin is nature's gift to her most indolent child. They are neither tall nor fair, but they are slight—every movement is full of grace, and they are essentially feminine.

Because they do not indulge in athletics and "go in" for the "higher education" of women, detracts nothing from their personality, and they are thoroughly *simpatica*. The limit that it is considered well for a girl to reach in school is not as high as an American would sanction, but they see no need for higher mathematics and science.

When a girl has learned to write the most diminutive faint hand—to express herself extravagantly in poetic language—the spelling mostly correct, there is no fault to be found with her literary education. Schools are as primitive as everything else in Mexico. The small children study aloud like the Chinese, and to a person passing a school house it sounds like buzzing bees.

The children of a family usually take the surname of the mother, and when the father dies the mother always signs herself "widow" of Señor, whoever he is. This custom seems very strange to Americans whose mother's name is always lost at the altar.

But there are many things strange about the Mexicans.

"Andele—andele—vamonos" ("hurry—hurry—let us go,") calls out the blue uniformed conductor—in sharp contrast to the prosaic "All aboard" we are accustomed to hearing.

At every stop Americans clamber down to gaze wonderingly upon the novel scene about them, until this pretty note of warning is given.

When one contemplates a tour the initial consideration is the wherewithal to meet incidental expenses—the anticipation of which makes him without a bottomless pocket shudder with apprehension. The popular conception of a tourist is one whose pockets fairly bulge with money. Story books—the touring gilded fool whose actions prompted some wiseacre to observe that "a fool and his money soon part," and the time-worn newspaper joke of the young man who slaves all the year for a salary in three fig-

ures and parts with twenty dollars for a foreign supper, are responsible for the erroneous idea.

Another popular conception is that the inhabitants of all foreign countries are a set of professional pickpockets, who, in a figurative sense, keep their hands constantly down in the pockets of the traveller.

Tourists who honor our sister Republic with a visit are surprised at the insignificance of expenses. The greatest leveler of life is travel. Cinders, delayed trains, and impossible sandwiches are no respecters of persons. These touches of nature make the whole world kin. The ever changing scenery and the shifting stream of humanity lend an interest to travel that is fascinating and demoralizing. How infinitely more enjoyable to roll through the stony streets in a peculiar old fashioned coach than in modern rubber-tired carriage.

Nothing could be more charming than a string of these old coaches to be seen there

any day. Nothing bespeaks their lack of progress more plainly than the vehicles they use. Every great change the world has seen has been marked by a change of vehicle. They are mile posts in the world's progress. While in appearance their trains are like ours, the several grades of travel make a vast difference. It is a kind of first-class-passenger-stay-in-and-ride — second-class-passenger-get-out-and-walk — third-class-passenger-get-out-and-push affair that is alleged to have existed in the old stage coach era. To begin with the third-class and end in a luxurious Pullman, is immeasurably better than starting in a Pullman and ending amid the squalor and unutterable woe of the "*pobres*." "*No equipaje con boletos de tercera class*," reads a third-class ticket. This ostracism of luggage on a third-class ticket falls, a harmless shaft, at the feet of the "*pobres*."

Had the officials ruled that they must carry baggage in order to ride, they would in-

deed have worked a hardship on them, for they do not possess a rag which is not doing actual service. They repose stolidly, if not comfortably, on a bench built along the side of a coach, the poverty of appointments and unclean condition of which does not in the least disconcert them. In these third-class coaches lie the possibilities of smallpox, for, in contagious diseases, Mexicans are very acquisitive. They all have smallpox. It stamps upon their faces a visible proclamation that they have lived up to the tenets of the times.

Far more reasonable in price—their hotels make up in novelty what they lack in system and haste. The servants are docile and pleasing, and do not consider that they hold the destiny of the establishment in the hollow of their hands.

One does not have to wander block after block with his weather eye out for a lunch stand. The whole culinary talent of the city turns out *en masse* seeking whom they

can find to devour their wares—"huevos cosidos" (boiled eggs,) "camotes" (sweet potatoes,) and other things which would appeal only to a very vitiated and susceptible palate. At every corner one is beset by these venders, who insist that you take something for your stomach's sake, and for that very reason you desist.

A vagary of Mexican character that is well nigh baffling, to a student of human nature, is their vacillating understanding of "*In-gles*." (English). In stipulating terms of exchange or barter their understanding of English and monetary denominations is perfect. If given too little, they immediately devise a means of conveying to you in no uncertain manner that something more is coming to them; if paid too much, and one attempts to impress them with the fact, all understanding forsakes them, they become exasperatingly obtuse, and it is almost like "holding a man up" to get your money back.

Curios can be had for a trifle if bought in

the streets and markets; however, if one wanders into their lovely shops, he emerges from its alluring precincts a sadder but a wiser man, feeling as though he had gone through the extracting processes of an American church bazaar.

Another paramount consideration when going touring, is, "What shall I wear?" Ever since Mother Eve vainly arrayed herself in fig leaves, dress has been a necessary commodity in all civilized countries, and has come to be considered the keynote to one's character. For a tour of Mexico, the only preparation necessary is to haul down a few of your summer clothes that have escaped the rag man and take a light wrap for evenings on the plaza. It is said that a person going out after sunset without a light wrap is liable to instantaneous pneumonia. Thus you are amply equipped for passage through the domain of the Montezumas. However, if you wish to be the cynosure of all eyes and "*muy ele-*

gante," according to the dictates of Mexican propriety, provide yourself with several brilliantly colored costumes; above all things wear no short skirts, and your promenades on the plaza will be one long triumph from a standpoint of individual attention. Among the climatic peculiarities is the fact, so they affirm, that one stepping out of a darkened room into the ever radiant light is in danger of being struck blind.

Their distinctive love for flashy colors has always been unaccountable to tourists, unless attributed to their geographical location. It is characteristic of people who live near the heart of nature and especially people in tropical or semi-tropical lands, where the delicate brush of nature has given to the plumage of every bird, and petal of every flower, a matchless brilliancy. Their eyes have become trained to it and they look upon all neutral shades as a direct departure from nature. Brilliant hues lend to life a gaiety dear to the heart of every Mexican. The

"pobres" in their bright blankets attract the attention of all tourists, who shower down pennies to the motley throng at every station in order to watch the feverish scrambling of agile children and decrepit mendicants. It is a fair field and no favors.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE had been planning the trip for some time before we took it, the Señora and her three daughters. But at last we shook the dust of Monterey from our feet and left for Mexico City.

We spent a few days at Saltillo, and I have wondered that more Americans do not spend their summers there. The matchless climate, the awe-inspiring mountains, and the quaint picturesqueness of the little place, unite in making it a particularly charming resort.

The sunsets of Mexico! Above all else in beauty impossible of description—it daily sheds its luminous colors over that

pretty world to overwhelm traveller and dweller alike with its wondrous beauty. "When the longest day at last bows down to evening" and the great sun sinks slowly to rest behind some lone mountain and nature throws her calcium lights with their matchless glints and tints upon the vast canvas of the heavens, the soul is enthralled as things mundane lose themselves in the sweetness and solemnity of the spell.

Boarding houses are almost unknown, and so strong is their feeling against publicity in domestic life that a girl, or a girl with her mother, cannot call on a friend at a hotel without jeopardizing her good standing. To rent a house in Mexico is a sort of hide and seek game without the fun. One must trudge up one stony street and down another with furtive glance directed toward every ironbarred window for the inevitable little fluttering paper sign of vacant houses. Most of these are *viviendas* or suites of rooms that rent for any fabulous figure the

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owner dares name; the higher upstairs, the deeper in pocket.

The hotels which are so good here are wonderfully cheap. But life is cheap anywhere in Mexico. For the same price in Mexican money that one would have to pay in gold in the States a person can board there at delightfully foreign places.

As the train flashes into the tropics through lands bright with sunshine, streaming green foliage and tropical sky, the traveller's face loses its look of vacant half inquiry, for one of pleased wonder and vague delight in the shifting scene about him—the peculiar people and the more peculiar names; names such as "*Cañon de las zopotes*" (Cañon of the turkey-buzzards), and *Cuernavaca* (Horn of a Cow).

The trip from Saltillo to San Luis Potosi is lovely, every moment one of interest. The way is lined with great Spanish dagger plants as tall as oak trees. A thousand parrots scream in the forests as the train rat-

bles by. At every stopping place, and there is one every few miles—peddlers meet the train crying out their wares, which consist mostly of little horn trays and the pretty bright woolen *serapes* or blankets.

One old man tried to coax me into buying a toy he exhibited with much pride—made of dry corn-stalks. It was something between a carpenter's sawhorse a horse and a rabbit. I don't believe there is a child in the United States who would have enjoyed playing with it.

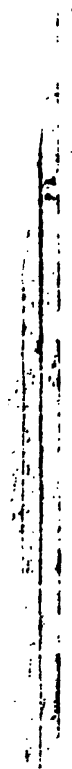
Our purses received the most guarded protection during these peddlers' invasion of the train, for they have a very unsavory reputation as "*rateros*" or thieves lying in wait for every train—literally lying in wait, for they bring their blankets and sleep by the track until the train comes in. They are not notified of the change of schedule, but that makes no difference—they know it has to come some time and they have nothing else to do but wait.

We spent a week at San Luis Potosi in the home of Señora's brother, who had a sweet sad-faced wife and three little girls, and we were royally entertained. I enjoyed most the evenings on the plaza, listening to the band. No music can express the love, the heartache and the yearning that theirs does, and in San Luis it was particularly beautiful. There is music in the very air—music peculiar to the country and the people. Nothing could be more exquisite than their "Home, Sweet, Home" found in the strains of "La Golondrina." When away from his native land a Mexican's eyes fill with tears at the first notes of this air, and he dreams of his adobe or marble home with brightly glistening eyes. It strikes the soul of the stoutest, sternest native of that sentimental land.

Intense, emotional, and high-spirited as the Mexicans are, one is impressed by the absence of insanity unless produced by a peculiar opium. However, there was a



A HALLWAY IN THE HOUSE OF THE SEÑORA'S BROTHER.



beautiful girl near us who became insane about music, a daughter of one of the best families. Mexicans are rigid in the enforcement of their law that there shall be no music after ten o'clock at night, unless at a ball. No private family is safe from arrest who allows music after ten, but this family have a special permit for their daughter, and almost any night after twelve she may be seen on the roof of her home bowing and smiling her acceptance of imaginary floral tributes, her clear voice ringing out sweet and startling on the midnight air. She imagines herself a prima donna, and such she doubtless would have been but for the misfortune of diverted faculties. More than one person strolls over to Dr. Coss street late each evening, and stands, rapt, listening to this poor nightingale, unable to realize that the beautiful human songbird is a crazed creature, a rarity indeed in that land of enchantment.

Our Americans are not slow to see the

possibilities of a new country, and Mexico is practically a new country, and they are rapidly awakening to the fact that not far from us lies a land blessed by a glorious climate and imbedded with rich minerals, until several millions of American dollars are invested there in mining properties monthly.

I knew an American boy who opened a photograph gallery there, and he and a friend invested their little savings in an old mine that was thought to be worthless. His salary was small, and his expenditures naturally less, but their determination never wavered. When they eventually got possession of the mine they interested Northern capital; and the young photographer recently sold one-third of his interest for a quarter of a million dollars in gold. Of course this turn of affairs may be called luck, but, after all, "luck is pluck." A Mexican thinks money by inheritance the only money worth having,—perhaps being

reared in that sleepy clime makes them the languorous people they are.

No land under the shining sun is more wonderful, more peculiarly interesting than the historic land of the Montezumas. From the time of the sun worshippers down to the time of the Diaz worshippers, its thrilling history reads with a romantic charm that is indescribable. Lying for centuries wrapt in slumber, it seemed all unmindful of the progress of other lands. Like Rip Van Winkle, when it did awake, it strenuously resisted all innovations in the least calculated to disturb its time-honored ways and traditions. But the restless, resistless spirit of the twentieth century is silently stealing in upon it, and while the changes of the past decade were in gradual process of evolution, they were scarcely perceived by those living there. Despite these changes, were one borne, in the twinkling of an eye, from the Arctic region, with its rigorous atmosphere and bleakly

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desolate landscape, to the tropics, where the lavish hand of nature has given to every tree and flower such perfect form, he would be no more struck with the wonder of the transition than he is when he is whisked across the Rio Grande into Mexico. Tourists return from that winterless land wondering at the vagaries of nature. But at last God's masterpiece, man, is the most wonderful of all, and to the student of human nature who loves to watch the faults, the fancies and the virtues of his fellowmen, the people of Mexico are a source of pleasant research. Indolence is a national heritage, handed down from an unbroken line of luxury loving ancestry. They drift and dream their lives away to the tinkle of the guitar. In the even tenor of every-day life they are most passive, yet, when aroused, their love, hate and jealousy, their emotions and passions amount to hysteria.

At the markets are stalls where butterine

is sold. This butterine is all made by an American woman who got a concession to make it, selling every pound for fifty cents, Mexican money. Her butterine goes all over the Republic; no one else can make it without buying part of her concession from her. This is one of the advantages of Mexico for any enterprise, as there can be no competition.

"Mantequilla, mantequilla," ("butter,") *"blancias,"* ("eggs,") *"leche,"* (milk,) was the droning cry I heard all about me in the market place, when at my side, to my pleased surprise, I heard a substantial American voice call out: "Fresh butter here!" It was a stolid business-like looking American woman presiding over her stall amid that sea of foreign faces.

When progressive Americans see the natives actually plowing with crooked sticks, and using other such primitive means of agriculture, it is surprising that more peo-

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ple do not hasten to seek their fortunes there.

Only by evincing interest and admiration can an American gain *entrée* into Mexican society—a society never so gregarious as in the North, and, among patricians, far more exclusive. Ignorance of their language—the only possible social medium—is a bar to intimacy. Broken Spanish as well as broken English gives one a childlike, perhaps simple air, and in serious moments this becomes taxing. Pleasurable conversation depends on all participants recognizing and appreciating the delicate shades of the tongue in which it is carried on. Americans and Mexicans cherish the most elaborate misunderstandings of one another because of the inability of each to come into closer contact. While the language is natural and rhythmical, they seem to delight in unpronounceable names for places. *Izmictlanapochalocca* is the name of a port which the soul reaches on its journey heavenward.

Iztaccihuatl or *La Mujer Blanca* (The Woman in White) is the lofty mountain near Mexico City that presents the appearance of a woman on a massive white bier, wrapped in her shroud of everlasting snow; lying there, her figure is perfectly outlined, with her hands folded on her breast—another of nature's peculiar departures.

Before reaching Mexico City we passed through a cañon called *Infernillo*, (Little Hell) full warm enough to warrant the name.

San Luis Potosi is a pretty white city of low flat topped houses, but when, at the end of the week we landed at the grand capital, I forgot San Luis, forgot everything but the beauty about me. Every one that goes there is struck with the dazzling whiteness of the city. The very first breath of air is wonderful. For the first few days one does feel the eight thousand feet altitude by shortness of breath. This is first experienced the night before arriving at the capital

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when passing over an elevation of eleven thousand feet. After this slight inconvenience, though, there is a constant joy in living—an indescribable sensation of ecstasy. A suicide in that glorious country is an unheard of occurrence.

For miles and miles before reaching the city we passed the sign "*Zona Torrida*," where began the giant trees with hanging vines and brilliant blossoms on the highest branches. This almost impenetrable forest is a mass of verdure from the loftiest tree top to the ferns at the roots, and the air is full of the smell of green coffee. The great wide white asphalted streets are teeming with beautifully dressed women—dashing victorias and flower girls. Of course the brown laughing children are there too. It seemed to me the appearance must be that of a French capital.

We at once began our sight-seeing, contrary to the directions in the guide book to "Rest two days." First we went to the

grand art studio, where in cool white galleries are displayed pictures by the old masters. One immense painting, covering almost one side of a room, represented Abraham on the verge of sacrificing Isaac, and the angel staying his hand. It is the grandest painting I ever saw, the expression of perfect obedience on Isaac's face—the stern suffering of Abraham's—I could have lingered before this one alone for hours. There are all kinds of pictures; landscapes, portraits, and still life; also a grand hall of sculpture. On all sides are students in linen aprons copying pictures—purpose and genius on every face—until it does indeed seem like Paris.

The Spanish are a talented and ingenious people. They excel in painting, music and sculpture, and nothing displays more genius than their weaving of the *serapes*, and the drawn work of the "*peons*." They are too dreamy and poetical for practical life, and, were it not for enterprising Americans, they would live their little lives in

ignorance of the treasures stored about them; still, they quietly resent the appropriation of their rights by Americans.

There seems to be a lurking jealousy in the heart of each one you meet; a preconceived determination not to be friends. They are inclined to be very distrustful of "*Gringos*," as they call Americans.

Their antipathy for Americans seems more intense the deeper into the interior one goes, so that it cannot be entirely accounted for by the ruthless manner in which Americans have outraged their proprieties.

There was a handsome young cousin from an interior city visiting the Señora and her children, and the three months of his visit were in many ways unpleasant to me, if laughably so. Luis Adolpho became very soon the hero of the home, praised for his eyes, his glowing color, his grace and his clothes. One day I told him that his clothing looked very American; he declared he would burn them at once. His hatred

was absorbing, violent. Nothing I could do would change his views. Some days he would be merry and agreeable, drawing me into conversation, when, with a gesture of supreme disgust, he would exclaim:

"No recuerdo que Usted es una Americana!" (I do not remember that you are an American.) His cousins and the Señora would laughingly remonstrate with him, but all to no avail.

When the telephone rang he usually answered it, for they love their telephone very much—here they can engage in conversation otherwise forbidden. If some poor unfortunate called for me he would exclaim, *"Gringo!"* and slam the receiver into place. I came in from a little jaunt once and found every photograph I possessed marked "No good." Luis Adolpho had done this. It was the only English at his command. When his father told him he wished to send him to college in the States,

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Luis Adolpho declared he would not be branded by such a "*vereguenza*" (shame).

He was supposed to be very much in love with a pretty girl living nearby; one day he came in and announced that she was no longer his "*dulce carazon*," for someone had said she looked like an American, and he lamented deeply that he had wasted money by having her serenaded.

Although people say their politeness is a veneering, and among the "*peons*" it does amount to obsequiousness, I think even a Frenchman would have to look to his laurels before a high-born Mexican. Though it may lack sincerity, there is a beautiful grace in his every bow—in every movement—a grace that it is impossible to imitate.

The National Museum contains treasures of much greater interest than prosaic museums usually have, with their following of tired school teachers. Here is Maximilian's coach, mounted in gold with gold cupids on it, and lined with white satin and lace, a

luxurious equipage; here, too, the calendar stone upon which seven hundred human beings lost their heads in a day.

On the eastern end of the Alameda, in Mexico City, has long stood one of the most palatial homes in Mexico—doubtless the grandest in the Republic. The stairs and corridor floors are of the purest marble; out of the corridors open about fifty perfectly furnished rooms. The magnificent dining hall is a hundred feet long, furnished in rosewood and mahogany. The glistening floor is in rare mosaics. In this room are several thousand pieces of exquisitely painted china, sparkling glass, and silverware.

Fairylike in their daintiness are the bed-chambers, with their soft lace draperies and hand embroidered sheets. The parlor fittings are beautiful; every chair is in a frame of massive gold, under sparkling chandeliers that cost enough to keep a modest family in comfort for a lifetime. In this room is

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a table of inlaid wood showing the face of a beautiful young girl—a piece of workmanship without a parallel. The air is filled with music of passionate sweetness, for the love of music is inherent with the whole nation.

The Cathedral is magnificent, but the recent substitution of wooden floors for tiling detracts greatly from its beauty. There is no telling the money that has been spent on that building, and in it. The jeweled crown on the Virgin Mary cost thousands of dollars—paid for chiefly by the hordes of poor who worship there.

Mexicans are natural gamblers. Even small boys sit on the streets all day long at some winning or losing game. I was present on one occasion when a car driver excused himself to his passengers, and stepped down to engage in a wayside game, of heads and tails. In a few minutes he came back, having pocketed his winnings, and, thanking us for our patience, drove on. All day

men and women pass back and forth on the streets with their little game cocks—for thus they make or lose a living. Everybody buys lottery tickets. They are sold on the street by newsboys like daily papers. Roulette is another thing that has a stronghold on the public. Fortunes are made and lost in a single night in the roulette quarters.

Much has been written of Chapultepec—the home of the revered President Porfirio Diaz, who is really a grand man. Nothing has ever been written in his praise that has said too much—he is the stronghold of the Republic. In order to appreciate that white palace on the hill one must see it. 'A more fitting location could not be found, with a fine view of snow-capped Popocatepetl in the distance, and framed by the nearer mountains. The people love their president as Queen Victoria's subjects loved her.

The *Paseo de la Reforma* is the "swell" drive of Mexico City—it is to the Mexicans

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what Champs Elysées is to Parisians—a broad, shady avenue leading to Chapultepec—beautiful in every detail, with its magnificent statues every few blocks—for the Spanish spare no pains to beautify their capital.

Big “double-decker” cars run through the city, killing several sleepy “*peons*” daily, down among the slums. Cars run out to the little villages near the city, clustering among the mountains; these are delightful trips to take. A few minutes’ ride and one is transported to a sleepy little hamlet, as quiet as a buried city, whose peaceful streets it is a delight to wander through.

There is no place, though, so lovely as the flower market. It occupies one block of ground and is a mass of poppies, violets, roses, lilies and carnations, with their intoxicating perfume.

I priced one mammoth bouquet of American beauty roses. “Five dollars,” was the prompt answer.

“No, indeed,” I said; so he dropped to



two dollars without further parley. Still I refused to buy, and he kept falling until finally he followed me up the street and asked me to take it for twenty-five cents, which is much less than twelve and a half in our money. Fancy my triumph at getting my arms full of American Beauty roses at such a figure! One day at the fruit market I asked for twenty-five cents' worth of oranges, and was appalled when the woman counted out thirty-seven large ones and beckoned me to take them. On the way down we had made a stop where hundreds of peddlers boarded the train with great bouquets of orchids for sale, and would not fall, as is customary, in their price. Regretfully we were thinking of having refused them, worth as many dollars in the United States as they demanded in cents here, when we got another chance at them. While the train was circling twelve miles around the mountain these natives had scrambled down two thousand feet and were

waiting for us at the station, ready to "close" at any offer we made. Then we understood why they had been firm in their first offer.

Victorias can be rented on any corner for fifty, seventy-five cents and a dollar an hour, and as many people as can get in may go at that price. Those at fifty cents an hour are likely to contain fleas, for the low class people use them; the others are quite elegant. We did not know the difference when we first arrived, until we were nearly devoured by fleas, and some one explained why it was. It is not at all amiss to discuss fleas there, though. I have seen Concepcion and Rosita make a dive after one right in company without even saying "*Con permiso.*"

The cheap carriages have tiny yellow metal flags on the seat by the driver, the next price red, and the finest one a blue flag.

The only way I could remember which was which, was by saying in my mind, "yellow for yellow Mexican, red for ordinary red-

blooded individuals, and the blue for the blue-blooded people." Though very childish this served the purpose. The prices are remarkable when one considers the difference in money.

The change of money is rather confusing at first, and the mind involuntarily runs a figure two through every price. A person feels wonderfully rich when the money is changed going over, and he gets more than two dollars for one. But how flat the purse coming back and changing the money at Laredo, when exchange is probably as low as thirty-five cents for a dollar.

When one steps into a carriage there is always a dirty little boy who runs beside it, no matter how fast it may be going, until he is panting for breath. The only way he ever gets left is by stopping to challenge some other urchin who is trying to take his place. One day while on a shopping expedition, I decided to go to the post office to see if my name was posted up there among the list

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put up daily in Spanish for letters of no particular address. I left my parcels in the carriage, and the little urchin, smiling sweetly at me as I went in, assured me that he would watch them for me.

When I returned there was a great commotion in the vicinity of the carriage, every one of them berating my little attendant for being a *ratero*, which he stoutly denied. I appeared upon the scene, and a young Mexican man, bowing low, told me that the little boy had stolen a comb. As I turned to reprove him, he snatched it from his shirt bosom and tossing it toward me, fled down the street—a policeman at his heels. I watched him out of sight and was glad to see him gaining ground. The very next day I saw the little fellow on the street, and he smiled an unashamed smile of recognition. 'Tis a pathetic sight to see the little fellows almost running their legs off for the sake of a possible penny.

Three days we devoted to the ascent and

descent of the Popocatepetl. First we went to the pretty town of Amecameca, then up to the *ranchero's* home and from there slowly by ropes we climbed, with the guide ahead. We wore heavy warm clothing and took along plenty of food. Arriving at the summit we were well repaid for our exertion. A beautiful view for miles around us, and the triumph of being able to say we had climbed Popocatepetl. What had taken three days to climb we descended in a few moments. How? By taking a seat on a mat of rushes—and w-h-sh-t! We were back at the ranch. Of course we were frightened, but not tired. It was a delightful trip, both ways.

We spent one lazy month here, sightseeing when we felt inclined, and at other times revelling in the sunshine and music of the plazas. Then the Señora turned her face homeward with unwavering determination, and though we left with reluctance we enjoyed the return trip as much as the one

down. Monterey seemed quiet, indeed, after the gay, noisy, flashy capital.

Two months more slipped by and I began to yearn for home. "Breathes there a man with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said, 'This is my own, my native land?'" became my constant refrain, and the letters from my loved ones made me more and more heartsick for a glimpse of that dear land of stars and stripes. I had learned to chatter the Spanish language quite fluently; nearly a year's self-imposed exile had made me feel like an orphan. One day when a letter came, announcing the approaching marriage of a dear girl friend, and asking that I come to be bridesmaid, I told the family I was going home. It was at the dinner table that I made the announcement. The dear Señora dropped her face in her hands and began to sob. That very evening I commenced my packing, and set a day for my departure less than a week hence. I grew



A HAPPY HOME CIRCLE.

almost wild with joy at the thought of home—so much so that I feared the family would feel wounded. Never in all my twenty years of happy life had I felt such delight.

Often there had been a motley throng under my window; children and brown faced babies, laughing and chattering with me in their own tongue. I never knew why they loved so to come unless for an occasional bright bit of ribbon for the girls, and the "*cigarros*" for the boys. I knew why I loved to have them. What girl would not be pleased with their pretty flattery? Such lovely extravagant things they would say to me! Sometimes I would become extravagant and shower down pennies, their big awkward pennies. Then what a scrambling there would be! Like a barnyard scene, when corn is scattered among the fowls, and such blessings as they would call down upon me. I learned most of their

names, and naturally there were Conchitas and Pedros, Carmens and Rafaels, for these are as inevitable in Mexico as our Smiths and Jones. When I told them one day that I was going back to the States there was a unanimous roar of sorrow, little brown grimy fists rubbed tearful eyes, and I knew then what true little friends I had made. They had really learned to love the *Señorita Americana*, and their little homely gifts were most touching. Treasures that they had carefully hoarded up were poked unhesitatingly into me through the barred window, and for once they accepted pennies without evident joy.

I had grown so roundfaced during the year that I was almost afraid the home folks would not know me, and hoped I hadn't forgotten how to speak English. The night before I left, Señora went to the Cathedral to offer a prayer for my safe arrival at home and happiness thereafter, and gave me

a beautiful pearl rosary, which, with tears in her eyes, she begged me to use; and an opal ring, and shed more tears over me.

Señor Carlos brought me a brilliant silken shawl, and I knew it wasn't given in the spirit in which they usually give presents. If a person expresses admiration of a thing a Spaniard has, even if it is his carriage, he offers it to you, and insists that you take it. Of course, he doesn't expect you to do so, and would probably cut your acquaintance if you did, but he would be no gentleman not to offer it. One matter-of-fact old man I knew, was unfortunately expressing admiration of a blanket a Mexican friend had when the friend began to insist that he take it—so the American did—expressing great appreciation. Naturally he was much surprised a few weeks later to hear that he had been called a thief by the giver. Of course he was expected in a few days to send back the

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blanket. But this the American did not know.

There was genuine sorrow, I know, at my departure. Even Señor Carlos' voice broke as he declared I was like a sister to him, and left the room sobbing.

Such love did they show in every way—even locking my room and declaring it seemed like a death chamber—that my rapture was mingled with grief.

They knew I loved them and their country; every phase of the life I had lived for the past year; and so fond were they of me that the Señora declared she could not bear to think of my ever marrying a cold-hearted American, for I was so different—so much more like them! she declared admiringly.

Dear Señora! She would not say good-bye, and when I slipped in her room she was there on her knees, her back to the door, sobbing. She did not hear me enter nor come toward her, until I had put my arms

about her and whispered "*Mamacita!*" Then she wrung her hands and cried "*Oh, hijita Americana, hijita.*" I kissed her and hurried away, blinded with tears, and have not seen her since, for in less than an hour I was speeding toward "Home, Sweet Home."

THE END.

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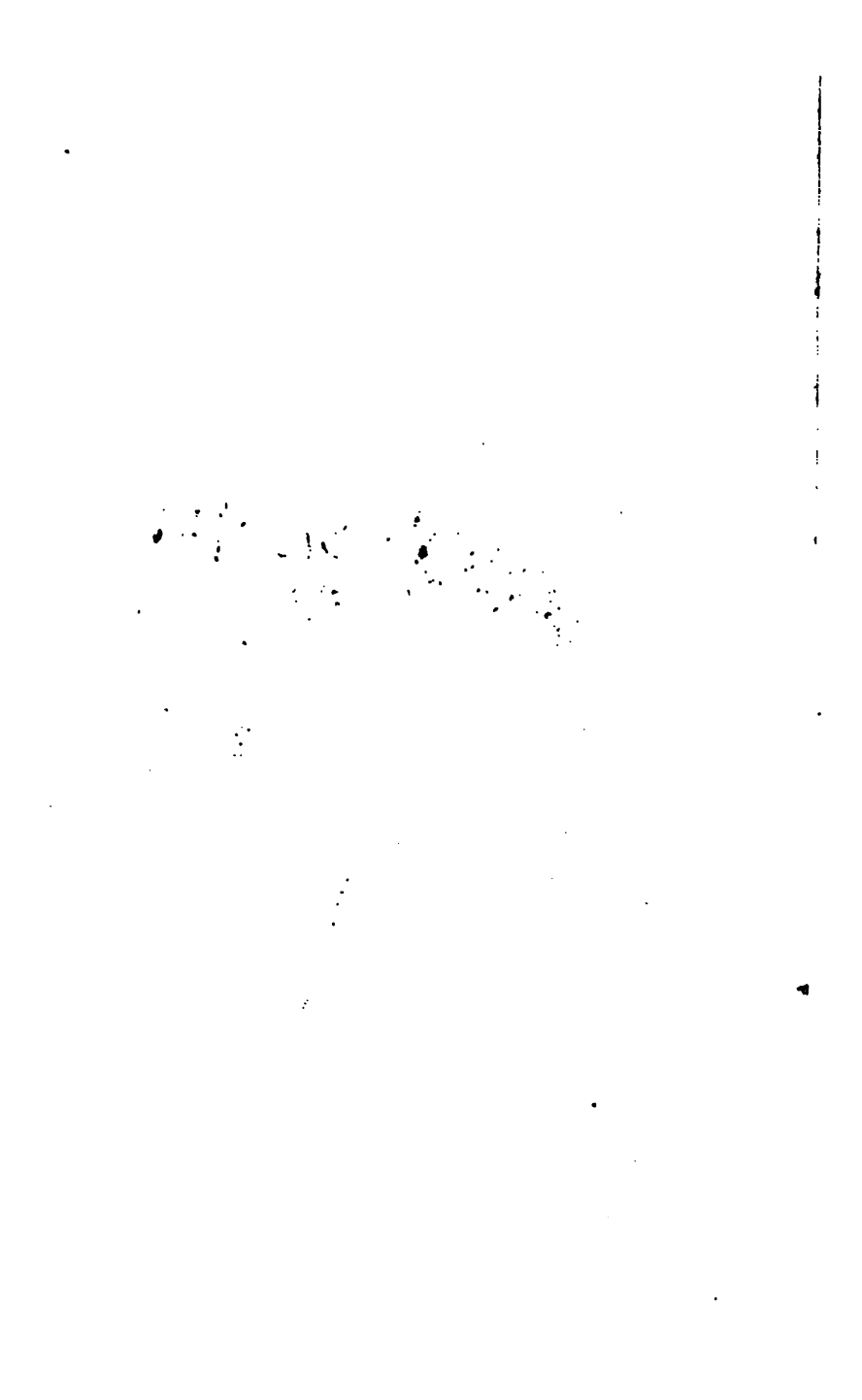
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